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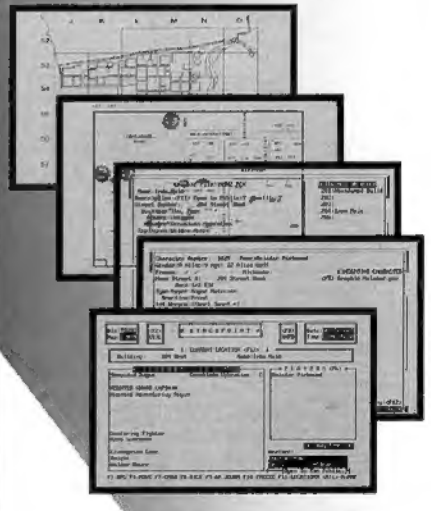

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SHADIS

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CRIES FROM THE ATTIC

Editorial of A Madman

Chasin' A Rabbit!

Our production manager, David Seay, has a little expression he's fond of using around the office that has become the unofficial slogan for SHADIS. Sometimes when he is working on the magazine he becomes glassy-eyed and oblivious to the passage of time. When told to take a break he shrugs us off and continues to work. Eventually, we have to pry him away from his databases and envelopes and send him home to his wife.

David calls it "chasin' a rabbit." He picked up the phrase at GENCON last August when we broke away from our booth long enough to take in the dog races in Lake Geneva.

Apparently, Dave identified with the dogs' single-mindedness. They don't care about the race. They don't care about purses and trophies. They just want to chase that damn rabbit around the track.

Many of the letters and phone calls we've received here have commented that it appears we are having a good time putting out SHADIS. I'm glad it shows. It's probably because we've all learned to enjoy chasin' rabbits.

As I write this editorial, I am proud to say I am chasin' a rabbit over the Christmas weekend with Kristy Keefe, our new Art Director/Copy Editor.

You'll see Kristy's magic touch throughout the magazine. Not only has she chased those pesky typo-gremlins away, she has also fine-tuned the entire magazine so that it is more cohesive and polished. Thanks Kristy! I'd like to add that Kristy can chase a rabbit with the best of them. She'll fit in just fine around here.

Speaking of newcomers around here, I'd like to welcome Mark Arsenault aboard. Mark has been doing such a great job reporting on the gaming industry in his small press publication, *The Gamer's Connection*, that we've asked him to be our Industry News Editor. Mark will be heading up the *Bits n' Pieces* column.

Word of mouth has done a pretty good job of getting the news out already, but in case you haven't heard, the cult-classic comic strip, *Finieous Fingers* will be coming to SHADIS with our next issue. Keep a close eye on your coin pouch.

You've probably already noticed the full-color 1994 calendar in the center. The calendar is our way of thanking our readers and advertisers for their support over the past year. It's also a reminder that we will continue to bring you the best gaming coverage and articles in the coming year, while remaining strictly independent.

Be sure to check out the fantastic subscription offer on page 54. No other gaming magazine has made such an offer – for a limited time you can get a free SHADIS T-shirt ***and*** a free game with your paid subscription.

Before I close, I want to urge all of you to pick up pen and paper and tell us what your opinions are. Don't just tell us what we are doing right, tell us what we are doing wrong and what changes you would like to see. We could always use a few more rabbits to chase around here. ❑

Jolly R. Blackburn
December 26, 1993

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MAIL BAG

Our Readers Talk Back

Due to space considerations, some letters have been edited. While letters of praise and 'atta-boy' are greatly appreciated, those containing constructive criticism, complaints, and/or suggestions are more likely to see print. At any rate, keep those letters coming!

Greetings Dear Readers,

The mail just doesn't seem to stop. Oh dear. We read each and every letter so even if it isn't printed, your comments are welcome and your suggestions and criticisms are thoughtfully considered. So keep the letters coming. Remember SHADIS is an interactive magazine – we want you, the reader, to be involved.

Gameweaver

Dear SHADIS,

I have recently acquired a copy of Issue #10 of your magazine. May I say how impressed I am with its overall quality!

One minus point before I sign off. The SHADIS *Interrogations* seemed pointless and superfluous to me. Shad was constantly interrupting and ruining the flow. Perhaps it's me, but couldn't you do a straight interview (which I believe would be a better read and have greater depth)?

Martin Woodgates
Devon, England

We received a few letters like yours, Martin. It seems that there are quite a few of you who would like to see in-depth interviews. We chose to go with a celebrity-roast format because virtually every game magazine interviews on a regular basis.

It seemed to us that it was the same old question and answer routine. After five Steve Jackson interviews explaining how he got started in the business what's the point? Besides, the interrogations fall in line with our policy of not taking things too seriously.

So we decided to hunt these guys down and have a little fun with them. We still ask informative questions, but at the same time we are able to show a lighter side of the subject.

One thing about the Interrogations *is that the subject is usually more deeply involved in the writing process and able to suggest his/her own questions.*

At any rate, reader response has been largely favorable and we even have game-celebrities contacting us and demanding an interrogation.

GW

Dear SHADIS,

I have bought the last three issues of SHADIS. I have found your magazine to be very interesting and useful even though I do not game as much as I used to.

Hook, Line & Sinker is good reading and also supplies ideas and stimulates new ideas. The articles on criminal justice in both fantasy role-playing (Issue #8) and sci-fi role-playing (Issue #10) cover an area generally ignored in role-playing.

The one thing in sci-fi law and order that is overlooked is that landing on a planet requires the players to go through customs. I require players to declare as they would going through customs here. Depending on the technological level of the planet, some weapons and implants would not be allowed. The player's character can either have them removed or neutralized while on the planet (or wherever they are). Or they can stay in quarantine until they decide to cooperate with the authorities and pay all costs. Another thing that can keep the players from messing with the law and order of a planet is to have the planet's crime syndicate hunt the players down and turn them over to the police (remains are acceptable if a DNA match is possible). And then there is the planet where the players' characters go through customs in their heaviest armor and most powerful weapons and the customs officers look at them and say, "Well, what do you wimps want?"

Michael McKown
Monterey, CA

Dear SHADIS,

I just got my first issue of SHADIS and I loved it! I even sent away for your back issues.

I like how you have set up the magazine. The interviews and columns are such that you have fun with them – not the straight forward business type as with some other rags. The only thing you should do is expand your convention coverage, both large and small.

I have played games for fourteen years (minus the time in Saudi Arabia) and it is good to see new blood like SHADIS come along and give us gamers a shot in the arm.

I just started playing a game called *Brown Water Navy* or *Ironclads* and was wondering if you could find any other rules or stuff for it other than the basic set?

James Warrington
Palmyra, PA

Our staff is stumped James. We have never heard of Brown Water Navy, *but we'll put the word out here. If anyone has further information on this game, drop us a note.*

GW

Dear SHADIS,

Issue #10 was definitely the best issue thus far. SHADIS reminds me of the early *Dragon*™ and *Space Gamer*™. There is a grass roots level of excitement that I

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haven't seen in gaming for years. It's contagious too – I find myself interested in gaming again after feeling burnt out for the last few years.

I think what impresses me most is that there is such a cross section of gaming, presented in a way that no one form dominates the other. I've never been interested in PBM games *until* I started reading the *Post Marque* section in SHADIS.

Keep up the good work and hang in there. We need an independent games magazine.

Shawn Merriam
Norco, CA

Dear SHADIS,

Thank you for promptly sending me my free issue of SHADIS. I've skimmed through it, and it looks like y'all are having lots of fun. Enclosed is my check for a subscription.

SHADIS came to my attention when someone wrote to me for information about my RPG zine, *Re:Quests!* I appreciate your listing my publication in the *Other Rags* section of *The Market Platz* (with the correct address, even!), though I am curious as to how you heard about my zine in the first place.

Thanks again and have fun with the magazine.

Mary Kathy
Farmers Branch, TX

Our editor has long been an avid supporter of small press. The Other Rags *section is just his small way of helping other publications get some much needed exposure. After all, SHADIS began life as little more than a newsletter handed out among friends and family.*

Readers are encouraged to send in addresses for game publications not listed in our Other Rags *section. I should point out as we go to press that it is uncertain whether the* Other Rags *section will be run every issue or bi-annually. With the introduction this issue of* The Zine Scene, *we will be taking a closer look at several publications each issue.*

GW

Dear SHADIS,

I am writing to ask you to ask Joe Genero for his hand in marriage. I am an average woman with average charisma and have dreamt about our average wedding day for many of my average years. When Joe dropped out of sight I was sure he would be showing up on my door step at any moment. Imagine my surprise when I heard he had taken a part-time job at the Zippy Mart (near me in Iowa). I know Joe tends to be shy which is probably why he didn't stop in and visit while he was here. Please give him my love, as I have already given him my heart.

Mary Luann Genero
nee Lubowsky
(Just seeing how
it looks in print.)

Dear SHADIS,

Just wanted to tell Joe Genero, "Welcome back!" And a big pat on the back for Jason Holmgren the cartoonist. I was beginning to think you would never find poor Joe. Keep up the good work Jason.

Tony Saunders
Augusta, GA

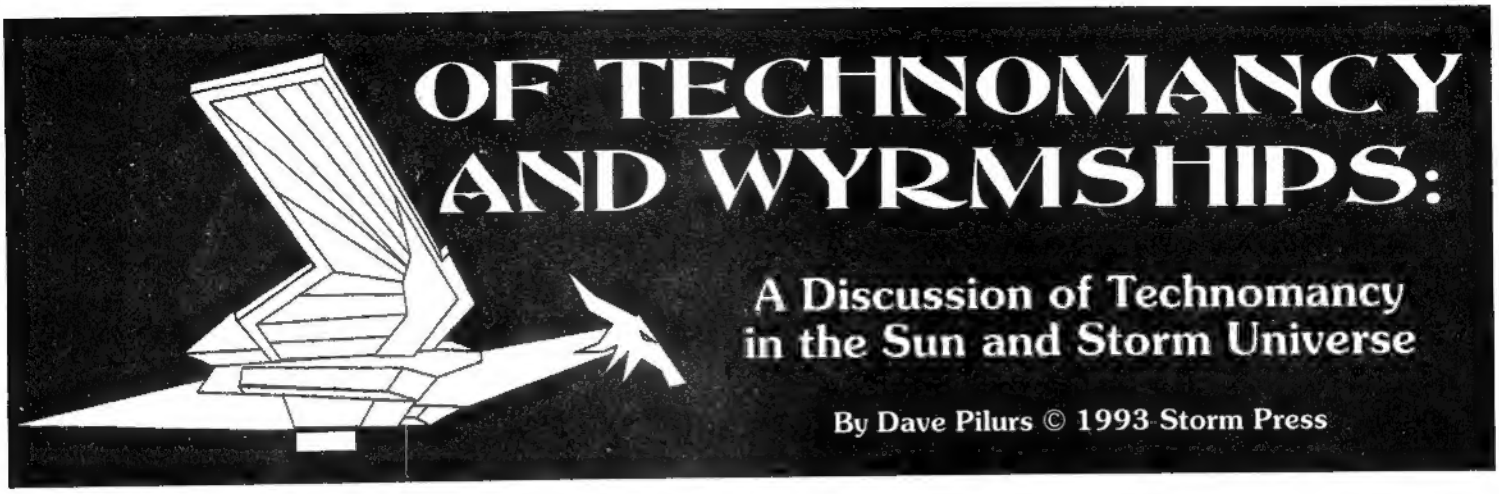
We're glad to have Joe back as well. His future, Jason informs me, is a little precarious though. Jason is very busy with other projects and hasn't had the time to dig up new material for Joe Genero. So to save Joe from another premature death, we are putting out the word. If you know of any bizarre rules or situations to run Joe through – send them in! Prizes will be awarded to those entries chosen for the strip. In the meantime, Joe is alive and well with this issue as we find out how long it takes to drown him.

GW

Dear SHADIS,

I love *Knights of the Diner Table.* "Hack-and-Whine" may make the gamer vocabulary. If the referee were a faster thinker, the explanation is simple. The previous band came in while the dragon was out feeding. The dragon returned to find his horde gone and assumed the Knight's band had taken it, and thus, the fight. Just as realism demands an occasional Monty Haul, so it demands something like the referee had designed.

Paul Cardwell, Jr. ❑



OF TECHNOMANCY AND WYRMSHIPS:

A Discussion of Technomancy in the Sun and Storm Universe

By Dave Pilurs © 1993 Storm Press

Science fiction and high-tech fantasy are littered with the wreckage of starships, weapons and equipment. All these devices hail from a technological base as yet unimaginable. You could ask how they work, but the answer is unbelievable. They're so advanced, they might as well be magic. Yet, why not approach the equation from the other direction?

In some fantasy worlds, magic is the one true source of all technology. In these worlds, the rules have changed. Invent the wheel? Why bother? With magic, you can start with levitation and move on to produce powered flight. With magic, you don't need gun powder or internal combustion engines. You don't even need weapons-grade plutonium.

Magic provides for all contingencies. Used in this manner, technology becomes an exclusive province of magic. The result: fans of fantasy and science fiction finally benefit from a unique means of blending two ostensibly separate entities. One need no longer choose between them, for they are one and the same. We call the magic that produces technology "technomancy," and refer to the resulting hardware as "technomantic" in nature.

The curious ask, "How does technomancy work? What do you build with it, and what are the limits?" The learned reply, "It's magic. The answer could fill volumes." Of course, the hard-boiled, jaded members of the crowd don't buy it. Truthfully, neither do I, and anyone who reads this deserves a better answer. I'm here to give it to you. My name's Erquight. I'm a technomancer in the employ of Doombringer Metatechnologies LTD. I work in the home office on Merdesaur. As part of my job I explain the nature of technomancy to the uninitiated. In this article I will explain the dual nature of reality, how it relates to the function of technomantic devices, and how we applied these theories in the construction of my company's most important product: Wyrmships.

The Dual Nature of Reality

My people have known magic for thousands of years. Unlike some races who learn magic in their youth and trade it for technology as they mature, we learned magic in our youth and retained it. Our study of this power evolved into technomancy. It is founded on the knowledge that we exist in a dual reality, one physical and one extra-dimensional.

The physical reality is most obvious to us. It includes the normal dimensions of time, space, our world, our sunmote, and the rest of the physical universe. Here, we have mass, solid form, and all the trappings of life. Here, we live, breathe, work and mate. Here, we have history and evolution. Without this reality, we have no life as we know it. Yet, we exist in greater depth than we realize.

Beyond the realm of our normal physical senses lies an extra-dimensional reality. People often call this place astral space, warp space, or hyperspace. We call it "E" space. Whatever you call it, we have proven beyond all doubt that it exists. We believe that it's part of us, and it's the source of our magic. As far as we can tell, all living beings, sunmotes, and planetary bodies exist in this "E" space as sure as they exist in the physical universe. Of course, we can't normally perceive "E" space, so some people think we made it up. Don't believe the cynics. It's real, but it plays by its own rules.

Extra-dimensional reality exists around our physical reality like the matte and frame exist around a picture. On some subconscious level we know it's there, but we can't see it. It possesses a different frame of reference. Passage through it distorts time and space as we know it. We wouldn't think to ignore it because it is this other reality that makes the limitless power of our sunmotes casually accessible.

In theory, this means that we can tap limitless power to make magic. In practice, it means that our bodies act as conduits for a raw, arcane energy that's hard enough to comprehend, let alone control. We use force of will to shape it and induce it to do our bidding. The results are sometimes spectacular, but they're also costly. I can tell you first hand. Not only does using magic tire you out, but it causes pain. The more power you tap, the greater the pain. Tap too much and you can kill yourself. It's not fun. Having said all that, I wouldn't stop doing it for anything in the world. So now you know. We have magic because we're aware of our dual reality.

The Keys To Technomancy

An affinity for magic is one thing. Using that affinity to produce the trappings of an advanced technology ... that's something else. Sure, you can use magic to produce tools, to change paper into steel, or to destroy whole cities; but a technomancer trying to make devices that do those things has other challenges to overcome. First, how will you power these devices? Then, how do you get them to do what you want them to do? The answers to these questions are the very keys to technomancy.

Power production was once every bit as tricky as controlling that power. Long ago, we had arms and armor that could make us better combatants. We still have

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ancient relics from that distant past, but technomancers regard them with distaste. I don't have to tell you that it was magic that made them work. I do have to tell you that we were the source of that magic. They existed only in the physical reality and could not supply their own power. Hence, using these devices gave us benefits, but they caused us to tire quickly. Moreover, they only worked while we held them and concentrated on feeding them power. It was a passable technique, but it was only practical for hand-held spheres, melee weapons, armor, and the like. We regard such early devices as "enchanted items," and we have learned that they are a mainstay among the younger, magically-oriented races of many worlds.

We had no solution until the legendary technomancer, Quarloth, discovered a peculiar, quartz-like crystal embedded in a rocky crag. Unlike all other lifeless, inanimate objects on the surface of our world, this crystal transmitted power from "E" space. With months of experimentation, she learned its secrets, and we gained the benefit of our first reliable external power source. It was the catalyst to great gains in my field, but it was not perfect.

These power crystals drew power from sunmotes just like we do. The amount of power any crystal can draw is directly proportional to its size. Furthermore, though the energy is clean and safe, the crystals are prone to decay. This occurs as a function of the quantity of energy drawn through it. A crystal that must provide its maximum output on a constant basis will decay quickly. Crystals that need only provide a fraction of their maximum output, or that need only supply the occasional gout of energy in a very short burst, usually last longer. Decay reduces the maximum quantity of energy the crystal can draw. Eventually, this corruption renders the crystal useless. As a rule, the larger the crystal, the more power it provides and the longer it takes to decay. Though a skilled technomancer can reverse this decay, if the effort fails, the crystal explodes. The yield of the blast increases exponentially with the size of the crystal.

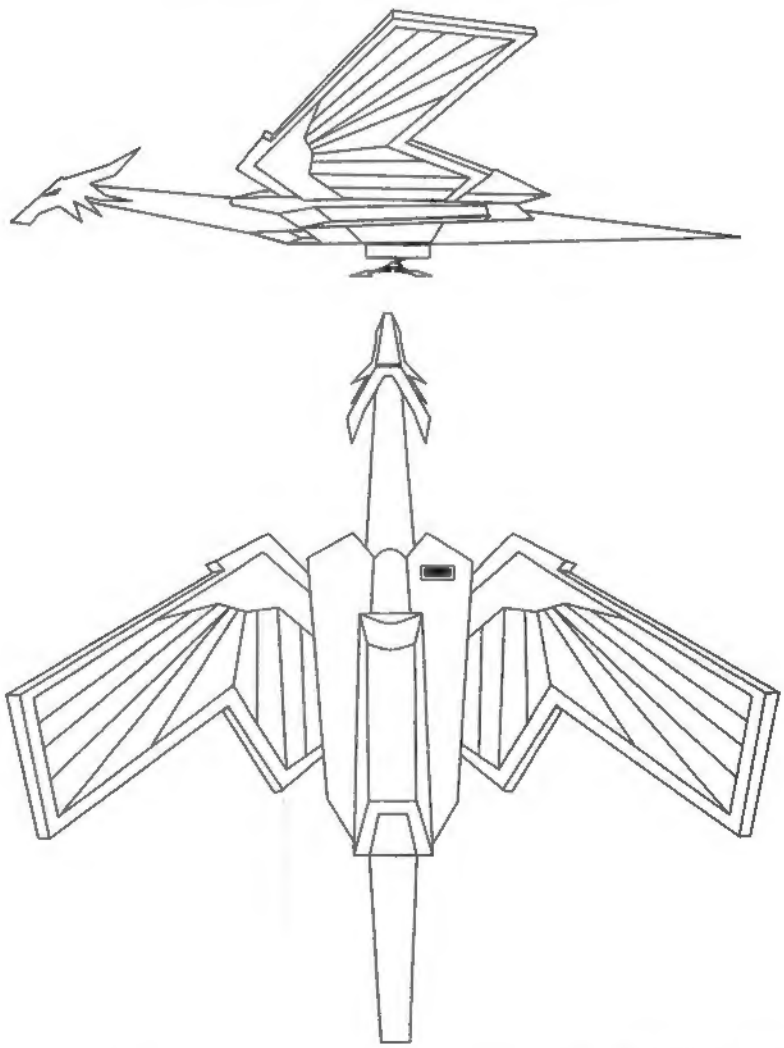
Crystals alone could not power our burgeoning technomantic base. As we developed more advanced and more powerful technomantic devices, we needed more and larger crystals. Eventually, our need for power outstripped our ability to produce immense power crystals. This sparked the search for yet another power source.

This search resulted in the development of reactors. It was not accomplished in a day, and it was not achieved without cost, but it did provide the means to feed our ever-growing need for power. The theory behind these devices is very simple. We based it on studies of our sunmotes, and it reads as follows: "With sufficient heating, inert matter takes on a dual existence. At that point, it draws vast quantities of power from "E" space and releases it in the physical universe." The process completely consumes the matter involved in the reaction. We've studied it, and we've found that technologically advanced cultures call this formless matter "plasma."

Reactors provide all the power we could ever desire, but they, too, have their inherent risks. These stem from plasma's unique nature. It's not a material, though it does have mass and take up space. It's also not energy, though it supplies no shortage of power to do work. This makes it extremely difficult to create and to control.

Plasma is difficult to create. Few materials easily lend themselves to plasma production. Light gases like hydrogen or heli-

Stormbane Class Battle Cruiser



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THE ADVENTURES OF BRISCO COUNTY, JR.™

By Jolly R. Blackburn

The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr. is Fox Network's new hit show starring Bruce Campbell. This one-hour action-adventure is set in the Old West. Jeffrey Boam & Carlton Cuse are the executive producers for Boam/Cuse Productions in association with Warner Bros. Television Productions. Brisco County, Jr. and all related characters are trademarks of Fox Studios. All photographs in this article were provided by Fox Studios.

Brisco County, Jr. froze in fear as he found himself standing face to face with his father's murderer. He stared down the barrel that had been shoved in his face, realizing it was the same Colt 44 that had laid his father to rest.

Brisco had been trailing the notorious, John Bly for hours along a treacherous cliffside trail. He had been apprehensive about catching up with the man he had been hired to bring in. Bly was a fox, an emotionless killer. The fugitive had bested the bounty hunter in several games of cat and mouse already. Each time, Brisco had barely managed to escape with his life. Bly was a formidable opponent who brought Brisco's inadequacies all too painfully to light.

Bly, his sixth sense serving him well, had doubled back on Brisco and gained the upper hand.

As the bounty hunter stood at Bly's mercy, he looked over his shoulder and contemplated leaping off the cliff. At least he would deny Bly the satisfaction of killing him in cold blood.

"Well, well..." said Bly, holding the gun steadily at arms length. "The son of Marshall Brisco County! I'm really disappointed. Your father would never have fallen for such an old trick. "

Brisco winced painfully at the words as Bly continued. "But then I really shouldn't be surprised. After all, you were never the man your father was."

He laughed at his own joke and then continued. "Course your father wasn't really that much of a man anyway."

Brisco was vaguely aware of the laughter that followed. His face burned with anger and he considered grabbing for the gun and taking his chances. Then his other option came flashing back.

Turning in one swift motion, he leapt over the rocky face of the cliff.

As he fell to certain death, Brisco yelled, "I'll see you in hell, Bly!"

Brisco cascaded several hundred feet only to land in the branches of a tall pine tree. As he tumbled to the ground, crashing through the branches, he emitted a string of curses and moans. Finally, he landed with a loud thud in a cloud of dust.

Standing to his feet and brushing the pine needles from his clothes, he looked skyward and cocked his head in amazement.

"I'm not doing that again!" he commented dryly.

◆◆◆

The preceding scene is only one of many that have made *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.* a favorite among television audiences. *Brisco* is a bizarre blend of elements taken from classic television westerns, science-fiction, and even a dab of fantasy. None of this would work, of course, if the show wasn't also filled with tongue-in-cheek humor. If Brisco falls from a cliff only to walk away unscathed, the cries of protest from the audience are quickly silenced by his one-liners. It seems Brisco is just as surprised by his good luck as we are.

Countless predecessors have attempted such a marriage of genres resulting in nothing more than television bombs and some red-faced actors and actresses.

How does *Brisco*, pull it off so well? The glue that holds it all together is the wit and humor of the characters. It's a formula that such classic characters as James Bond and Indiana Jones have used successfully. The creators of *Brisco* have taken that formula and created a show that is full of surprises. One never knows what to expect from week to week. The writers have that rare talent of timing – knowing when to introduce a little comic relief, without rendering the whole show with a campy atmosphere.

Brisco has much more going for it than just a unique setting. The real magic of *Brisco* can be found in the many colorful characters. Virtually every character, both large and small, are fully fleshed and interesting. That's what makes *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.* the perfect campaign setting for your favorite western role-playing game.

Avid players of such games as *GURPS Old West™*, *BootHill!™*, and *Western Heroes™* will find a wealth of adventure opportunities in Brisco. This article will, hopefully, give you enough character background and information to incorporate *Brisco* into your own sessions. I have kept the information generic and have refrained from giving hard-stats so that it will be of use to players of any western system. When describing the characters, I have simply listed their apparent skills. Any competent GM should be able to read the bios and quickly generate the appropriate stats.

A Quick Overview

Fans of *Brisco* know that you cannot afford to miss an episode. Part of the appeal is that each episode introduces new characters and uncovers more information about the mysterious orbs.

For those of you who did miss early episodes and are now lost and waiting for the reruns to appear, take heart. Here's a quick overview of the series to get you back on track.

A Strange Discovery. In the first episode of *Brisco*, we are taken to a remote site in the mountains of southern California where a gang of Chinese slave-laborers are being brutally pushed to complete a railroad tunnel in order to make way for a new track.

After a particularly large blast, four laborers in ankle-chains are sent into the tunnel to begin to remove the rubble and debris. To their amazement, the blast has uncovered a strange metallic orb. While inspecting this new find, one man tugs at one of the metallic knobs that bristle the orb's surface, and extracts a rod of electric-blue light. A strange hum fills the silence of the tunnel as arcs of light flicker from the rod. The arcs of light suddenly intensify and begin to dance over the four workmen, causing their chains to fall away. The four slave-laborers escape into the hills and soon wild rumors begin to surface about four men with superhuman strength and powers.

The orb is, at first, confiscated by the mining company and later, by the U.S. Government.

Death of A Legend. Meanwhile, elsewhere in California, the infamous U.S. Marshall Brisco County, Sr. and his deputies are escorting John Bly by train to a federal prison. The train is ambushed and stopped by Pete Hutter, one of Bly's gang members. Bly and his gang escape after shooting down Brisco, Sr. in cold blood.

"I Am My Father's Son." After the Marshall's death, the Tycoons (more about them later) put out a call for bounty hunters to round up Bly's gang and to restore law and order.

Brisco County, Jr. shows up to take the job, wanting to avenge his father's death. In the proceeding episodes, we follow Brisco as he rounds up Bly's gang and slowly uncovers the mystery of the orb.

Lonely Hearts and New Friends. Along his way to adventure, Brisco meets and falls in love with the unpredictable

Dixie Cousins, a dance hall girl who always seems to know more than she is telling.

Brisco reluctantly finds friendship in the form of Socrates Poole, a timid lawyer who is the intermediary between the bounty hunter and the Tycoons. He also befriends Lord Bowler, the famous bounty hunter who has a knack for intimidation.

The Orbs

Before the GM can incorporate *Brisco* into his western campaign, he is going to have to deal with the strange metallic orbs head-on. These strange artifacts have powerful, seemingly magical abilities.

The creators of *Brisco* are being very secretive about the orbs and are only revealing information a bit at a time through the series; so we will have to glean what we can from those episodes that have appeared so far and use a little speculation to fill in the gaps.

First, let's take a look at what's been revealed in the series:

- Brisco has learned that a total of three orbs have been discovered.
- One was severely damaged when it was found. This orb was later destroyed when John Bly attempted to tap its powers.
- A second orb is in the possession of a mysterious professor who has been studying it secretly. As of this writing, no one knows of the location of the professor or the orb.
- The last orb, in a surprising episode, was taken back to the future by Brisco County, Jr. while visiting himself in the past. Brisco learned that the orb is desperately needed in the future.

This means that there will be only one remaining orb in the *Brisco* campaign. This orb is sure to be the source of future adventures as John Bly and his gang struggle to obtain it and use it for their own evil purposes.

We know very little of the origin of the mysterious orbs. Brisco is told that his destiny is tied with them. He also learned that the orbs have been sent back from the future in order to help mankind.

The orbs themselves have incredible powers. In one episode, Brisco's fatal gunshot wounds are healed by the orb. The GM should definitely give the orb healing abilities within the game

Anyone who draws power from the orb receives superhuman strength. This power is dangerous, however, if the user has anything but good intentions. Brisco is warned in one episode that it is dangerous to use the orb without understanding its power.

We know the orb works toward good even if evil men attempt to tap its powers. In such a situation the orb will twist the outcome so that only good comes of it. Such was the case when Big Smith, one of Bly's henchmen, came in contact with the orb. Smith robbed a bank soon afterward and gave the money to a mission. As it turned out, the money had been stolen deceitfully from the mission by the bank. Smith, compelled by the orb, had involuntarily set things to rights. By the time Brisco had caught up with Smith, the once cold-blooded killer had been transformed into a good samaritan.

The mere fact that the orbs exist in the year 1893 tells us that eventually, men of the future learn how to time travel and that they are somehow trying to alter the past or help mankind through some difficult period of history.

In my opinion, the GM should avoid giving the orb any hard stats. Instead, treat the orb as you would a deity in a fantasy role-playing game. The orb should remain mysterious and outside the realm of reality. Use it to guide the players and the campaign in the desired direction. Also, by not revealing too many secrets, the GM will not have to worry about the on-going series contradicting him.

When you begin to use the orbs in a campaign, you will find they are great plot devices and open up doors for many adventures.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that the orbs have their own agenda and appear to use men to fulfill their aim – not the other way around.

The *Brisco* campaign should center around ownership of the orb. Bly's gang will constantly be plotting to gain control of the orb. In addition, the U.S. Government is interested in studying the orb. It will be up to the players to determine if the government can be trusted with such knowledge and power.

The ultimate goal in the *Brisco* campaign will be to fully reveal the secret of the orbs. Secondly, bringing John Bly and his gang to justice will figure largely as a backdrop for the campaign.

Time Period

Brisco is set in the year 1893. The twentieth century is just beginning to loom on the horizon. You will have to depart from the rulebook here. Remember, *Brisco* has elements of science fiction at work in the shadows. There are also quite a few anachronisms. So far, episodes of *Brisco* have shown jet rockets, diving equipment, motorcycles, and other bits of technology that are slightly out of place in the Old West.

It may help if you think in terms of classic Jules Verne novels such as *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* or *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. GDW's *Space 1889™* could also be a good reference for introducing technology to the west. Don't be afraid to dispense with the history books and use your imagination.

Locale

The series is set in California, with the main characters based in San Francisco. The GM will want to work up floor plans for several locations in the old city. Frequent haunts for Brisco and the gang are the Golden Horseshoe (saloon), Wester Field Club (private club where the Tycoons meet), Stannions (restaurant), Loo's Curios (antique shop), and the San Francisco Gazette.

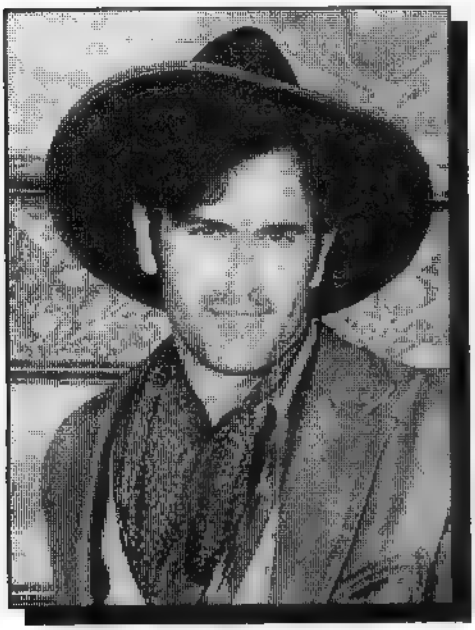
Recently, Lord Bowler has purchased a house and this locale has been used more frequently as a place for the main characters to get together.

Professor Wickwire has a laboratory where he tinkers with jet engine designs, diving suits, and other inventions. The clever GM could find many opportunities for adventure in this locale.

Now that we have taken a look at the setting and backdrop for *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.*, let's turn to the the characters themselves.

As mentioned before, I have listed the skills each main character has demonstrated in the course of the series. I have also listed each character's motivation and weaknesses It will be up to the GM to translate these skills and traits to the appropriate game system.

Even if the GM decides to allow his players to run their own characters, the regular *Brisco* characters can serve as valuable, well-detailed NPCs.



Brisco County, Jr.

Occupation: Bounty Hunter
Skills: Fast Talk, Tracking, Carousing
Motivation: Avenge Father's Death
Weaknesses: Women, Gadgets

Brisco County, Jr. is a graduate of Harvard Law School. Being a lawyer didn't "suit" him and he quickly left his career behind to become a bounty hunter.

Living in the shadow of his father, who was a famous U.S. Marshall, wasn't easy for Brisco, as he found himself tumbling from one scrape to the next.

Apparently, Brisco has many unresolved feelings toward his father. Sometimes it appears that he feels guilty for not being there when his father needed him. When strangers ask him who he is, Brisco sometimes remarks, "I am my father's son."

When he learned of his father's death, Brisco convinced the Tycoons that he was the best man to bring in his father's killers and immediately devoted his life to this mission. However, Lord Bowler is set on collecting this bounty on his own and conflict arises.

Brisco's closest companion is his horse, Comet. He has a bad habit of talking to his horse, something that concerns his friends. It doesn't seem to bother Brisco that Comet's loyalty can be wavered with a bribe of green apples.

After a rough and sporadic courtship, Brisco has just recently confessed his love for Dixie Cousins, the dance hall singer.

Lord Bowler

Occupation: Bounty Hunter
Skills: Tracking, Insult, Intimidation
Motivation: Money, Social Status
Weaknesses: Temper

Lord Bowler is a bounty hunter known throughout the west for his ability to bring his man in. He is also famous for being insulting, intimidating, and hard to get along with.

Lord Bowler prides himself in the fact that he works alone and that there isn't a better tracker in the business. Bowler hates competition and considers all other bounty hunters nuisances who are out to get their hands on his bounties.

When Lord Bowler and Brisco County, Jr. first met it was not on the best of terms, with both men competing for the same bounty

As time went on, it became apparent the two men had become fast friends (although Lord Bowler would more than likely strike any man who suggested as much).

While Lord Bowler growls and snarls a lot, those close to him have seen a deeper, more sensitive side to the bounty hunter.

Bowler recently financed a large house, complete with a butler and crystal collection. Behind the closed doors of his new residence, Bowler is apparently pursuing the finer things in life, going so far as to have himself tutored in the social graces.

Socrates Poole

Occupation: Lawyer, Legal Consultant
Skills: Oratory, Booksmart, Legal
Motivation: Justice
Weaknesses: Coward, No HTH Skills

Socrates Poole is an attorney and serves as the legal consultant for the Tycoons. When John Bly's gang escaped, Socrates was ordered to hire a bounty hunter to bring them in. He selected Brisco County, Jr.

Technically, Brisco is supposed to answer directly to Socrates and report his progress. However, as the two men began to work closely together, Socrates began to change and pick up Brisco's bad habits. Many of these changes were for the better and Socrates isn't so much of a "company" man anymore.

Socrates lives by the letter of the law, and often seems surprised and shocked that his fellow man often treats the law with little regard and lacks sense of fair play.

When Brisco was kidnapped and the Tycoons refused to pay the ransom, Socrates took it upon himself to save Brisco. Socrates' loyalty is so great that it often inspires moments of heroics in a man well known for his lack of fighting spirit.

Socrates spends most of his time covering for Brisco and keeping the Tycoons at bay. He is more than a little perturbed, that Brisco doesn't seem to appreciate the need to keep the Tycoons satisfied.

Dixie Cousins

Occupation: Entertainer
Skills: Seduction, Detecting Lies
Motivation: Power, Money
Weaknesses: Loves Brisco

Dixie Cousins is a saloon-entertainer with a habit of falling in love with outlaws. She is a talented singer and dancer and consistently draws a big crowd when she performs at the Golden Horseshoe.

She appears, on the surface, to be a gullable woman who falls prey to the men around her, but it's only an illusion. In reality, Dixie is a seductress and uses her charm and beauty to gather power and money around her. While involved with a man she plays the part of the faithful girlfriend, but manages to keep control of the situation, taking advantage of the opportunities that infatuation has to offer.

When Dixie met up with Brisco, the sparks began to fly. After a romantic game of cat-and-mouse she has finally admitted to herself and to Brisco that she is in love.

Falling in love hasn't tamed Dixie, however, in the slightest. She is still headstrong and independent. Using her ties with members in Bly's gang, she is still able to gather information on the gang's activities and plans, which she gladly turns over to Brisco

Dixie has demonstrated that she is an expert rider and is at home on the saddle as well as on the stage.

Professor Wickwire

Occupation: Scientist
Skills: Invention, Physics, Gadgets
Motivation: Furthering Knowledge
Weaknesses: Eccentric, Gullable

Professor Wickwire lives with his daughter on a farm outside of San Francisco, where he dabbles with various inventions and experiments.

Professor Wickwire will prove to be a valuable NPC for the GM. Through him the GM can introduce new items and new technology.

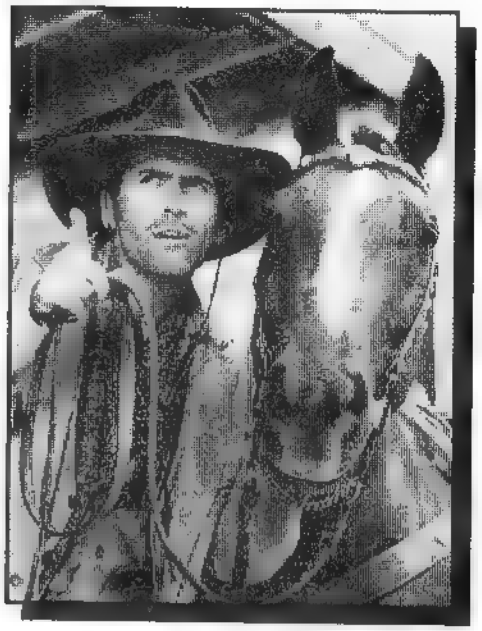
So far, the professor has developed a diving suit with a self-contained air supply, a jet rocket, and other items that have proved useful to Brisco in his adventures.

The professor is a bit of a scatterbrain. He tends to forget things and is easily sidetracked.

Bly kidnapped the professor to study the orb he had obtained. The professor was able to study the orb at length before it was destroyed, so he has valuable firsthand knowledge

The professor is very fond of Brisco, who shares his fascination with the future and technology. The two men love to gather 'round the professor's latest projects and compare notes.

There have been indications that the professor isn't in the best of health and takes medication for his heart. His daughter, Amanda, is very protective of him and disapproves of his heavy work schedule.



Comet

Occupation: Brisco's Horse
Skills: Comprehends Speech, Tracking
Motivation: Who Knows
Weaknesses: Green Apples

Comet isn't just any ordinary horse. Brisco finds himself apologizing for Comet often by informing others that, "Comet doesn't know he's a horse."

Comet has a bad habit of following his master into buildings and other places where horses aren't generally welcomed. He also has the uncanny ability of being able to find Brisco wherever he is. It doesn't seem to matter if Brisco doesn't want to be found – Comet is only too happy to allow anyone to follow him (or even ride him) while he is tracking his master.

Comet has a weakness for green apples and will do most anything to earn one. If confronted with the choice of choosing between loyalty to Brisco or a bribe of green apples, Comet will choose the apples.

Brisco doesn't seem to fault his horse for his less than perfect devotion. Comet has pulled the bounty hunter out of more than one scrape and the two seem to understand each other better than anyone else.

When on-lookers raise an eyebrow, they see Brisco sitting by a campfire and talking about his problems with Comet, but neither of them seem to take notice or care.

John Bly

Occupation: Master Criminal
Skills: Leadership, Gunplay,
Motivation: Control of the Orb, Power
Weaknesses: Pride, Over-confidence

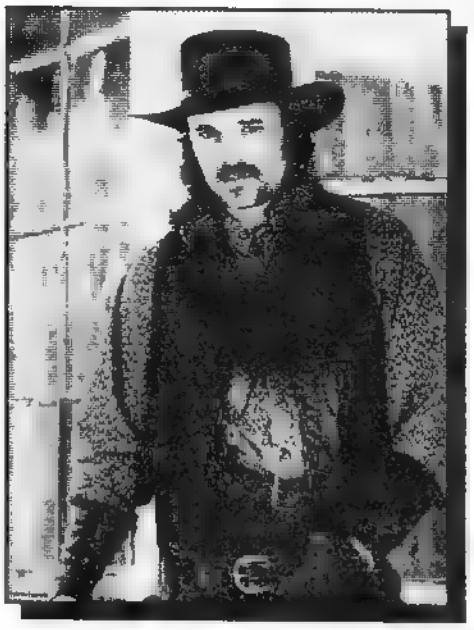
John Bly is feared throughout the West by law-fearing citizens and criminals alike. The cold-blooded killer has managed to assemble a gang comprised of thirteen of the West's most notorious outlaws.

Bly's gang had been so successful in California that the Tycoons put pressure on the government to do something about it. U.S Marshall Brisco County, Sr., heading up one of the largest posses in history, managed to corner Bly and his gang and arrest them.

Bly and his gang were freed by one of their henchmen, Pete Hutter. After killing the marshall, Bly went into hiding to reorganize his gang. It was while in hiding that Bly caught wind of the orb and its mysterious powers. Since then, he has become obsessed with obtaining the orb and putting it to work in order to further his grip of control.

Bly also has a personal score to settle with Brisco County, Jr. Perhaps it's because Brisco has foiled so many of Bly's plans, or maybe because he is the son of the marshall who almost did him in. Whatever the reason, Bly has developed a deep hatred for Brisco.

Brisco is determined to bring Bly to justice for the murder of his father and is relentless in his chase.



Peter Hutter

Occupation: Outlaw
Skills: Fast Draw, Riding, Leadership
Motivation: Power
Weaknesses: Hair-pin temper

Pete Hutter was killed during the pilot episode of *Brisco*. Strangely enough, he is listed as a "semi-recurring character" in the press releases from Fox Studios. Pete was a very colorful character. The GM may want to reintroduce him and ignore the fact that he was killed.

Pete Hutter is famous for his fast draw. Those around him are terrified of his terrible temper and unforgiving demeanor. To make things worse, Pete doesn't seem to have it altogether "upstairs."

Anyone who knows Pete has quickly learned a few simple rules to stay on his good side, in addition to staying alive. They know never to touch Pete's gun. Anyone who does so is quickly called out on the street and made to pay for their transgression.

Another rule to remember is that Pete is always right about any issue or topic of conversation. Pete is one of those annoying characters who believes himself to be knowledgeable in all fields of study. As soon as he opens his mouth, however, the listener is painfully aware that Pete has no idea what he is talking about and would be inclined to tell Pete so if he weren't so accurate with his pistol.

Other Characters

The following is a list of minor characters that have recurring roles on *Brisco*:

Big Smith. Big Smith was John Bly's right hand man at one time. Smith made most of his money by exploiting Chinese-laborers for the railroad.

Big Smith was pushed from a moving train while clutching the orb. He was assumed to be dead until he resurfaced as a sort of "Robin Hood" with super-human strength.

The Scarred Feet. The Scarred Feet is a gang of Chinese martial artists who operate out of Chinatown in San Francisco. They were organized with the express purpose of killing Big Smith and ending his slave-labor operations. Now that Smith has changed, it is unclear if the Scarred Feet will disband or take on a new cause.

Tycoons (Robber Barons). Tycoons is the unofficial title given to a group of the five wealthiest men in the West by the press. Between the members of this group, virtually everything in California falls under their control or influence. The members are Mr. Parson (mining), Mr. Kilbrad (shipping), Mr. Ingram (cattle), Mr. Thoroughgood (railroads) and Mr. Emerson (banks)

Mr. Thoroughgood was destroyed when he attempted to tap one of the orbs for strength and longevity.

The Tycoons hired Brisco to round up Bly's gang, but it has become clear that at least one of the Tycoons is not above working with Bly secretly in order to gain control of the orb.

Summary

I hope this brief overview gives you enough information to begin your own *Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.* campaign. At the very least, this exiting new show should help liven up those old western RPGs that have been gathering dust on your shelves.

Once your players realize they aren't limited to chasing cattle-rustlers and robbing banks, you shouldn't have any problem holding their interest.

If there are any other television shows or movies you would like to see covered, let us know ❑

hoisted back to the surface, and one of the divers readied.

The next few days will be a flurry of activity for the players, as the expedition goes into top gear, diving on the city and bringing up artifacts. The highlight will come on the third day when a fifteen foot tall statue of a woman will be found and brought to the surface. The statue is made of a metal totally unknown to human science and shows no signs of corrosion, despite the eons it has laid submerged (There's not even any marine organisms clinging to it as should be the norm.)

Depending on their skills, the players will find themselves working nearly round the clock – cataloging artifacts, making dives in the sphere, or operating the equipment. Observant characters will note that several members of the ship's crew have haunted looks, and whisper amongst themselves. Female characters will be awakened one night by Miss King's scream as she is caught up in the throes of a nightmare. If questioned, she will reveal that she dreamt of an insect-like creature that tried to speak with her. Investigation by the players will reveal that this same vision appeared to several of the crew, and (at the Gamemaster's discretion) to one or more of them as well.

To Face Neptune's Fury

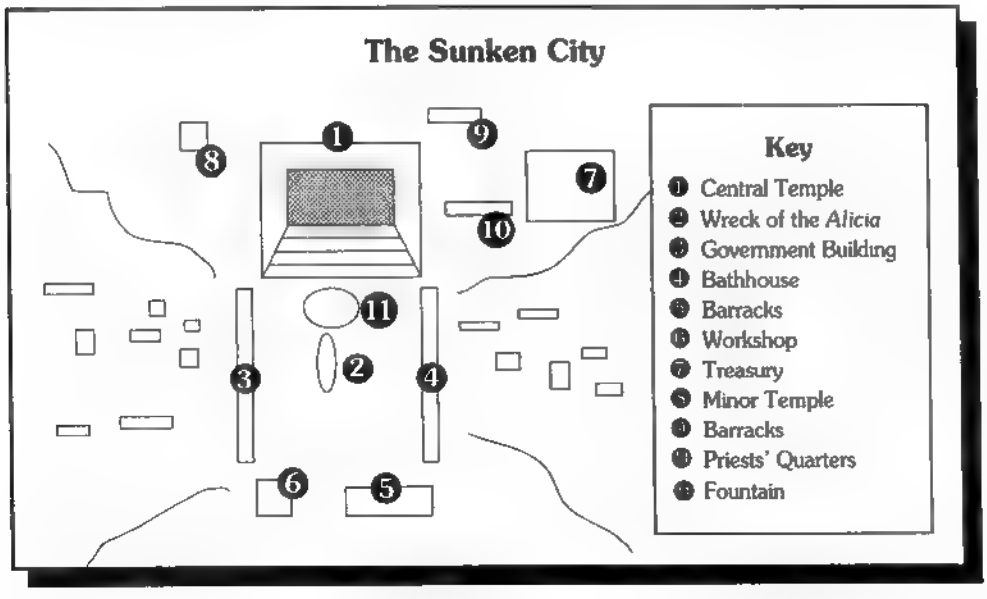
Once sufficient paranoia is running rampant aboard the ship, the Gamemaster should spring the next surprise on the players. One day, during the course of their work, one of the players will note a curious humming coming from the tautly strung rigging. As time goes on, the humming will increase and spread to loose objects. Anyone who comes in contact with the ship's hull will note increasing vibrations that, if investigated, will be found to emanate from the hull bottom. Suddenly, the ship will begin to shake violently and the players will have to make constant agility rolls to stay on their feet and keep from being thrown into hard objects. The masts will sway wildly and soon their shrouds and backstays (the network of cables that hold the masts upright and in proper alignment) will snap and whip about with deadly force. Players will face danger from falling gear and spars as the ship thrashes about. A loud, metallic shriek comes from the hold and soon water is gushing in at a rate which is beyond human means to stop. The *Alicia* is doomed, and the players have barely enough time to get off before the ship goes down. Loose debris, including the sphere, will soon bob to the surface, so the players have plenty to hang on to. Their relief should be short-lived, however. A great vortex opens up beneath them and they find themselves being spun about at a dizzying speed as they are sucked down. Their last memory, as blackness overtakes them, is of a mountain of water closing down atop them.

Asleep in the Deep

The players awake to find themselves on cots in a large semi-circular room. A small table sits in the center of the room and has a tray with fruit and a pitcher of an amber liquid sitting on it. Anyone tasting the liquid will find it quite sweet. A door is set in the flat wall of the room, but it is smooth, without a knob or other means to open it. A large window makes up most of the curved wall and anyone who looks out will have a great shock – the view is of the sunken city! The wreck of the *Alicia* sits in the central square, a kilometer or so away from where the players are dimly illuminated by the light filtering down from the surface.

The players, no doubt, will want to force the door and find out where they are. This, however, will prove a fruitless effort. The door will resist all their attempts to batter it down and there is nothing in the room suitable to pry it open. The players will just have to wait until their captors come to collect them.

An hour or so later, the players will see the door slide slowly up into the ceiling, then stop one quarter of the way there. What appears to be a giant spider crawls under the partially open door, tittering in disgust. Then, to the players surprise, it stands upright to reveal itself as the insect creature some of them saw in their dreams. It stands about 4 3/4 feet in height, and is dressed in green coveralls. A belt carries several devices unknown to the characters, and it holds what appears to be tools in three of its four arms. It uses the tools to open a hidden panel next to the door and make adjustments to the mechanism inside. It soon has the door working properly, and tests it several times before closing the panel with a self-satisfied grunt. It will then turn to the characters. If they attempt to rush him and escape, his free hand will fly to one of the devices on his belt as he dives out the door, which slams shut behind him. The room will then fill with a pale blue gas which renders the players senseless within moments. (Any player unlucky enough to be caught in the doorway as the door comes down, suffers a critical wound.)



Come Into My Parlor

If the players don't immediately rush their visitor, he will take a small device from his belt, aim it at one of the characters, and activate it. The device hums briefly as an orange beam shines over the character's face and then stops. The creature then aims it at himself and repeats the process. (See response one.) If the players tried to overpower him before, this will all occur as they are just waking

up form the effects of the gas. (See response two.)

Response One. "Ah, that is much better! Now we can get to know one another! My name would be unpronounceable in your language, so you may call be Buzzby. I am the custodian of this facility. It is a very lucky thing that the computers (what you might call a more advanced version of your Babbage engines) detected you and alerted me in time to save you from drowning. I am sorry for the loss of your vessel, but several attempts were made to contact you! The automatic defenses had no option but to consider you a threat and act accordingly. But we can discuss that more at a later time. For now, refresh yourselves, and tell me your names and where you come from!"

Response Two. "Well that is gratitude! I save your lives and you repay me by attempting to take my own! I have half a mind to put you all back where I found you! It is your own fault that you are down here – several attempts were made to contact you, but you refused to respond. The automatic defenses had no other option but to destroy your vessel. Now come along and eat something, we are going to be spending a great amount of time together, so we might as well make the best of it."

By now it should be obvious to the players that the best way to survive, and possibly return to the surface above, is to be in Buzzby's good graces. This shouldn't be too hard if any of the players are inventors, or are carrying any exotic devices. Buzzby will express fascination and ask a great deal of questions. He will be amazed at how far humans have progressed since last he saw any. If questioned, he will explain that his race came from another world to observe the life forms on the earth, setting up this undersea base in order to remain hidden. When the base was deactivated, he was left behind to act as caretaker until such a time as the base was to be needed once more. Buzzby will make mention of a "Stasis Chamber" in which he slept in a state of suspended animation, only to be awakened when the computers detected the presence of the *Alicia*. If someone asks where Buzzby's people are from, he will take the party to the central control center and show them a star map. Players with a background in astrology will observe that Buzzby's home world was located where the asteroid belt is now. When informed of this fact, and just how long he has been asleep, Buzzby will become quite saddened.

There'll Be A Hot Time ...

Buzzby will only have a short time to mourn the loss of his home world before the air is split with piercing sirens. Dozens of lights will flash red on the panels in the control center and Buzzby will race about frantically trying to see what the problem is. He will finally announce that the flux regulator on the main power plant has become inoperative and, unless it is repaired within four hours, the power grid will build up energy until it explodes in a cataclysmic explosion that will destroy the base (not to mention most of the Mediterranean basin). If asked what the damaged regulator looks like, Buzzby will call up a parts inventory on the computer and

show the players what it looks like. They will see that it is the orb that the *Alicia*'s anchors brought up days before. Buzzby will explain that there isn't a spare in the inventory, so the original will have to be salvaged from the shipwreck. He will ask the best swimmers in the group to come with him down to the seacock. There, he will fit them with underwater rebreather gear, and give them a sea sled to transport them to the shipwreck.

Once the players are at the shipwreck, they should have no problem finding the orb after a period of time. But the Gamemaster should by no means make it easy for them. Throw in lots of entangling cables, a jammed hatchway, and a dozen or so crates of artifacts to go through before they recover the orb. Once they recover the orb and get it back to the base, Buzzby will be able to jury-rig a connection for it and bring the power grid back under control.

Epilogue

Once the crisis has been averted, the next concern of the players will no doubt be getting back to the surface. Buzzby will explain that there is a mini submarine that can take them all back, but it will need to be repaired first. Once it has been repaired (a three day job), Buzzby will ask to be taken along with the players since, now that his race is extinct, he has no further reason to stay at the base. What happens next is up to the players. If they take Buzzby with them, he can be a great companion on future adventures, serving as an authority on the different races in the solar system in ancient times. Another option would be to reactivate the base for use by humans. Buzzby will greet this suggestion eagerly, ecstatic over the chance to work beside, and learn from, his new friends.

This adventure, although set up for the *Space: 1889* game universe, can easily be adapted for use in a *Cthulhu by Gaslight* setting. Merely make the proper modifications to the characters and NPCs. A Mythos creature can be substituted for the power grid, with the orb brought up by the party being part of a warding spell meant to keep it captive.

NPC Stats

Captain John J. King. Strength (4), Agility (3), Endurance (3), Intellect (3), Charisma (2), Social Level (2). Owner and master of the *Alicia*, King has spent his life seeking adventure on the high seas. He is known to be quite fair to those under his command, which explains why most of the members of his crew have been with him for years. King is fifty-two years of age with sandy brown hair. He is quite protective of his daughter, Alicia, and will inflict serious harm on any man who dares trifle with her.

Alicia King. Strength (2), Agility (4), Endurance (3), Intellect (4), Charisma (6), Social Level (2). Alicia King is the only child of Captain King. Raised by an aunt, she was schooled at a top Boston girls' boarding school. Sharing her father's adventurous spirit, she fled her comfortable life (and an alleged sexual scandal) in Boston, and joined her father on his voyages two years ago. She keeps the account books for her father and often chides him for some of his extravagances ashore. Alicia is twenty-four years of age and quite lovely, with jet black hair she inherited from her mother. She is also

quite flirtatious and will try to arrange a tryst with any handsome male members of the party.

Professor Thomas McKinley. Strength (2), Agility (3), Endurance (3), Intellect (5), Charisma (3), Social Level (3). Considered one of the top authorities on ancient cultures, Professor McKinley has devoted most of his life to locating and exploring the lost continent of Atlantis. He is quite certain that on this expedition he has found it at last, and will try to pass his enthusiasm on to others. McKinley is sixty-one years of age, with thinning grey hair. He wears silver Penz-Nez glasses and his clothes are in a constant state of disorder (despite the best efforts of his daughter, Julianna). His pockets are filled with small artifacts and hastily scrawled notes.

Julianna McKinley. Strength (3), Agility (3), Endurance (4), Intellect (4), Charisma (6), Social Level (3). Professor McKinley's sole child and his most trusted assistant, Julianna has accompanied her father on digs all around the world from the time she was a child, her mother having died in childbirth. Engaged to an American industrialist who has financed the current expedition, Julianna transcribes her father's notes and oversees the cataloging of all artifacts recovered. Julianna is thirty-two years of age and has golden blonde hair.

Buzzby. Strength (4), Agility (6), Endurance (5), Intellect (?), Charisma (2), Social Level (?). The last of a race of insect creatures whose world was located where the asteroid belt is now, Buzzby is the custodian of one of their undersea bases designed to observe Earth and the life forms on it. He has been asleep for centuries in suspended animation until the arrival of the expedition causes him to be awakened from his long slumber. Buzzby resembles a giant hairy spider with the exception of walking upright on his rear two legs. He has two large multifaceted eyes. He is fascinated by humans and wants to know all about them.

The Alicia. The *U.S.S. Alicia* is a steel hulled, three-masted sailing ship which is 220 feet in length. A large cargo hold takes up most of the center section of the ship. It is being used primarily as lab space to analyze artifacts brought up from the sunken city, as well as stowing others for shipment back to America. The aft section of the ship contains the master's cabin and the wardroom, as well as four smaller cabins for guests.

Rebreather Gear. Used by Buzzby and others when the undersea base was manned in order to perform repairs and other tasks outside; this equipment extracts oxygen from the water, allowing the user to stay submerged indefinitely. It can be used by humans once modifications have been made to the mouthpiece to adapt it to human mouths.

Sea Sled. This small, electrically powered vehicle can transport four people and their equipment for six hours before the batteries require recharging. It is controlled by a stick and pedal system much like an airplane. Seating is open to the sea which means the crew must have rebreathers to survive.

Mini Submarine. This craft can carry six people in tight quarters, and is controlled much like the sea sled. It is in need of extensive repairs before it can be used safely. ❑

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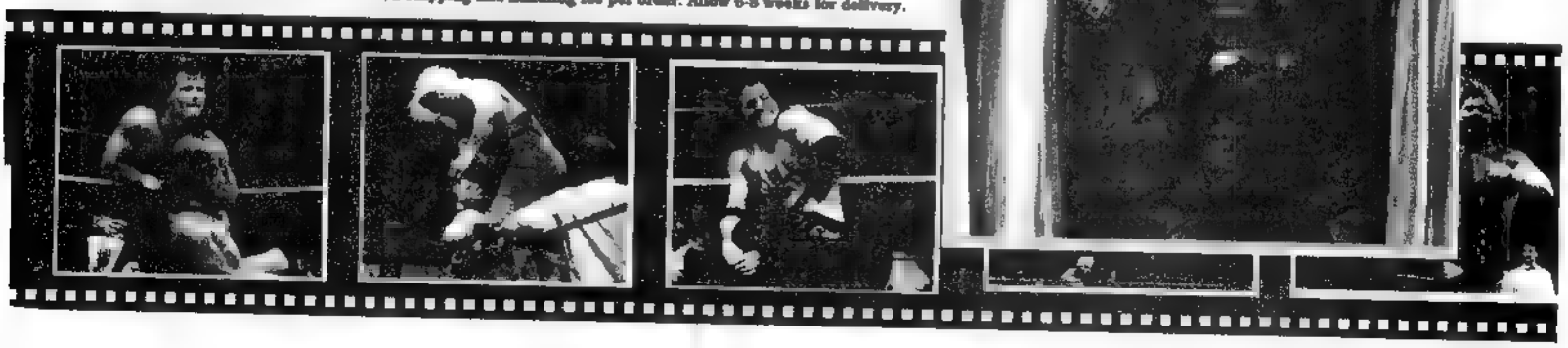

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HOOK, LINE & SINKER™

Adventures on the Fly!

Edited by Jolly R. Blackburn

What is a Hook, Line & Sinker?

Hook, Line & Sinker is one of the most popular columns to have appeared in SHADIS. For the benefit of our new readers, an HLS is a brief plot-line for an adventure presented in a simple format. HLS scenarios are generic and designed to give the Gamemaster the seeds for an adventure that he can build around. They come in handy when the GM has nothing else prepared, or finds the party has outpaced him and the prepared adventure suddenly ends. Readers are encouraged to submit HLS scenarios for any genre.

Explanation

Hook. The current situation or location of the adventuring party.
Line. An opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party. A *line* is normally presented as a short paragraph. Think of the line as the "bait" to lure the party into an adventure.
Sinker. The clincher to the *line*. The sinker presents the GM with a dilemma that makes the situation a true adventure.

The Test of Wisdom

Hook: During the course of an adventure, the party comes across a titanic battle between the forces of good and evil. Two entities representing opposite ends of the alignment spectrum are clutched in fierce combat. The battle rages in front of the party and both combatants are struggling desperately to gain the advantage over the other.
Line: As the party observes the battle, assistance is begged from the entity representing good. The party is offered a great reward for their help.
Sinker: The description of the battle is crucial to the outcome. The Gamemaster must convey to the party the awesome power of these entities. The catch is that when describing how each is fighting, make sure emphasis is placed on the "good" side fighting dirty, and the "evil" side fighting fair. This is because the entities' souls/minds have been switched. If the party fails to pick up on this, then they would end up helping the "wrong" side. This could cause a number of problems for the party. First, the reward will probably not be to the party's liking – opposite, in fact. Second, their actions would result in punitive actions being taken by supporting deities/guilds/organizations.

As an example, I had my party run across the classic "Paladin vs. Demon" struggle. They didn't take note when I described the paladin dropping his weapon and the demon waiting for him to pick it up again, or when the paladin struck at the back of the demon. Each of these comments was buried in an onslaught of colorful descriptions of the battle and so passed almost unnoticed. By the way, the power of the entities involved will preclude the use of normal scrying techniques to determine alignment. The players must use their powers of observation to aid them.

Paul J. Stachel

The Test of Faith

Hook: The party's quest continues. At one point, the party has only one way left to go. A darkened room with a *huge*, *black*, *empty* void in the middle.
Line: This one's easy, they have to go through the room to continue their quest.
Sinker: This "void" is, in fact, a very powerful enchantment meant to slow, if not stop, the party. The Gamemaster must be as detailed as possible in describing the void so as to instill fear of it into the players. No manner of testing will reveal what is behind the darkness, nor will any sound be carried through it. The party just has to have faith and walk through it to surpass this test.

Paul J. Stachel

The Insomniac

Hook: The party meets an interesting non-player character who has joined them in their adventures. He or she can be of whatever class the GM chooses.
Line: The NPC is an insomniac, and constantly seems to be waking up and trying to get things done. He drives himself mercilessly, and is so restless that the party may begin to worry for his health.
Sinker: This NPC is under a curse and will get progressively worse over the course of a few days or weeks. Gradually, the other party members will begin to behave in the same fashion.

One by one they will be unable to sleep, and will start wearing themselves into the ground. Eventually, they will all function as if under the effect of a spell. This might seem great, until they realize they are aging faster than normal. Another spell or curse removal will be necessary to return things to normal.

Ken Villars

The Horse Thief

Hook: The party is traveling in a wilderness area on horseback and forced to camp for the night.

Line: When the party wakes in the morning, their horses are gone. Whoever was on night watch is baffled as to why he didn't hear anything.
Sinker: If the party tracks their horses they will find it leads to a small cave in a nearby ravine. A deep pit has been dug in the ground and the horses have been placed in the pit. Near the pit a large bonfire roars brightly.

To the party's surprise a giant or similar creature emerges from the cave, carrying the carcass of one of the horses. He puts the horse on a large spit and places it over the flames.

The giant has a large grease-stained bag hanging on his belt and is wearing several charms and symbols that seem to indicate he is a mage or shaman.

The GM can decide the extent of the giant's powers or protections. Obviously, he possesses some form of animal charm which allowed him to capture the horses without any complaint or alarm.

This HLS is merely a small diversion. No self-respecting adventurer is going to let someone walk away with his mount or *eat* it! After the giant is dispensed with, the cave can be explored providing even further opportunity for adventure. Perhaps there are a few waylayed travelers being held captive or a horde of booty has been taken by passersby.

Jolly R. Blackburn

Bargain Spell Basement

Hook: The party is provisioning and equipping at a fair size town, and the spellcaster has found an interesting newsletter targeted at his class. Interesting articles and advertisements abound.
Line: The mage will find an irresistible offer to purchase several spells for his book at a great (nearly free) price. It is billed as an introductory offer to new subscribers of the newsletter. The GM should make it seem as innocent and irresistible as possible.
Sinker: The whole deal is a scam perpetrated by a powerful, but lazy mage. Even if the party's spellcaster doesn't subscribe, he will start to receive spells by courier, which he "can return if dissatisfied." A list of very interesting spells can be offered each time to the character, but the spells received will always be bummers.

Dissatisfaction is inevitable, as the spells are, without exception, arcane and useless: "Locate Amphibians," "Slay Cockroaches," "Cure Minor Cuts and Bruises," Protection from Camel Spit," etc. The character will be billed whether or not they return the spell each time, and the new spells will keep coming more and more frequently. This will, hopefully, end in a confrontation with the powerful mage, who will humiliate the character by casting spells that cause the character to be pummeled by giant frogs and cockroaches, or spit on by camels, etc. Local government will side with the scam artist, of course.

Ken Villars

Shep the Wonder Dog

Hook: The party has just cleared a room of some hostile threat, and is about to search the room for spoils.
Line: A small cage is unveiled which had been concealed with a tattered blanket thrown over it. In the cage, a medium-sized dog peers out with a pitiful look on its face. The dog whines softly as the party looks on.
Sinker: The dog appears to be extremely gentle in nature and very intelligent. It will obey all one-word commands typically associated with trained dogs (sit, stay, speak, etc.).

If the dog is fed or otherwise cared for, it will bond with the first character to do so. If allowed to, the dog will fall in behind its new master and become his or her faithful pet.

As time passes the dog's relationship with its new master will become increasingly one of a possessive nature. At first it will snare at any other party member who raises his voice or approaches its master too swiftly. Later, this behavior increases to the point that *no one* is permitted to come near the dog's owner without a ferocious growl. The dog will place itself between its master and the supposed threat, real or otherwise. If the master commands the dog to sit or stay, the dog will turn meek and yield.

Now, the owner may take this behavior one of two ways. He or she may feel the dog's behavior is a tremendous asset, or an annoyance. The GM should have a little fun with the situation. For example, the party approaches a city gate and the guard announces for them to stop and pay a toll. The dog, seeing the guard's hand go forward for the coins and not liking the guard's stern demeanor, suddenly lashes out and bites the guard. This could put the party in a sticky situation (evil grin).

Of course, the dog could save the owner from certain death by risking, or giving, its own life. Hey, everybody cried at the end of *Old Yeller* right?

B.A. Felton

Only the Lonely

Hook: The party comes upon a beautiful castle and grounds, with gardens, fine paintings, ponds, and happy people engaged in enjoyment of the large estate. The owner courteously invites them to be his guests for a while. The party will have a wonderful time if they stay.
Line: The owner will tell the characters that he has many fine friends who used to come visit him, but that they no longer come. He will describe in detail colorful and wonderful NPCs, supposedly quite famous in the area the party is headed, and implores them to look up his old friends and send them back to visit. He is obviously friendly and quite wealthy, and the players will see the advantage of his gratitude. Besides, he is quite kind, the place is fun and interesting, and the party is invited to come back anytime.
Sinker: The castle owner is actually a powerful illusionist. Sadly, he has become old and senile. Though the wealth and castle are real, all the people are illusions created unknowingly by the lonely old man. The party's first clue to this should be when they ask after the man's friends, and find they are near-legendary heroes that lived and died many years ago. The old stories will indicate they adventured with a powerful mage (avoid mentioning illusionary powers). This scenario can go many different ways. The characters can try to fool the man, or may try to further their friendship with him. He may be a good NPC through whom the GM can aid the party; though due to his condition, the help may be easily controlled.

Ken Villars

With References

Hook: This HLS is for a space opera RPG. The party meets an NPC at a starbase who strikes up a friendship. He is fairly likeable and claims to be an expert in various aspects of ship technology. The GM should makes these skills coincide with skills the party is lacking.
Line: If all goes well, the party will invite the NPC on board their ship as a crewmember. The NPC will seem very pleased with the offer and will accept after spending several moments considering it.
Sinker: The NPC is actually a con-artist who is wanted by local authorities. He is simply looking for a way out of the sys-

tem. He does have an uncanny skill for picking up jargon and being able to "fake it" after only observing someone doing their job for a short period of time. He will be able to perform routine functions without blowing his cover.

As soon as a crisis arises, such as combat, the NPC will quickly become confused and it becomes obvious he knows very little about his job. The GM can have a lot of fun with this character. Strange things can begin to happen on the ship as the inept character flips the wrong switches and performs routine functions improperly throwing other systems out of sync.

This HLS was created because I realized in many sci-fi RPGs, many players take NPCs at their word when they mention their skills and knowledge. This should cause them to at least ask for a résumé or references in the future.

B A. Felton

Is There a Doctor in the House?

Hook: This HLS is for a party which has a character with healing abilities in it. The party is in a small town. They hear a rumor that the King's son has just been brought to a local inn.

Line: Apparently, the prince was being escorted on a journey to another province when he fell mysteriously ill and is now near death. The word hits the streets that a healer is being sought. Alas, no one has come forward.

Sinker: Of course, the party will answer the call. The prince has been poisoned with a slow poison. The rigors of travel have increased the poison's affect. A courier has been sent to summon the King's personal physician (who is actually the culprit), but he won't arrive for several hours.

In the meantime, the player-healer tends to the Prince, but the poison will prove to be too strong. Strangely, the Prince will recover for several moments and will appear to be healed. He will sit up in his bed and talk to the party at great length. He will summon food and wine and become very talkative and will speak of greatly rewarding the party. Then, very suddenly, the Prince will have a relapse and die. (This is simply a characteristic of the poison – a short period of euphoria before death.)

The Prince's guards, who have observed their master's recovery and quick death, will suspect the party of foul play and will detain them. When the King's physician arrives, he will quickly announce that the player-healer is a quack and that his remedies killed the Prince. The physician will further claim that the Prince had a simple ailment which he would have recovered from, had the player not intervened.

The GM can decide what happens next. Perhaps the Prince, during his short recovery, said something that will help the party prove their innocence.

Jolly R. Blackburn

The Test of Honor

Hook: While adventuring on a time sensitive quest, the party comes across a deserted gypsy caravan camped in their way. The party is compelled to enter the camp.

Line: Each covered wagon has a sign posted. These signs are: "Coins, Gems and Jewels;" "Unique and Exotic Weapons and Armor;" "Entertainment, Live and Willing;" and "Fortunes."

Sinker: This was the test of the parties honor. If they remain to investigate any of the dwellings, the quest will then become two-fold harder to accomplish. This will become evident when the first wagon is entered. Immediately upon entering, a hideous laughter can be heard. Then all the wagons disappear and are replaced with "appropriate to the campaign" villains or monsters. The battle ensues and even if the party wins they will have lost precious time. If the party ignores the "temptations" they will be rewarded by receiving an item/piece of information/NPC that will assist in the quest.

Paul J. Stachel

Solo Adventures

The following *Hook, Line and Sinker* scenarios were specifically designed for solo-adventures. What do you do when you have an adventure designed for four to five players and only one guy shows up? Rather then send him home, why not reward him for his loyalty? Run him on a solo-adventure.

The Man Who Knew Too Much

Hook: A character is walking down the dark streets of a city at night. As he nears an alley he hears a noise and turns to investigate.

Line: Gazing into the shadows of the alley, the character can barely discern a figure stepping into a doorway As the door closes, the portal disappears. It's obvious to the character that it is a secret entrance.

Sinker: The portal is the secret entrance to a local thieves' guild. If the character inspects the portal, he will quickly learn how to trip a loose brick and open the doorway. A guard is posted on the other side, however, and quickly yells out an alarm. The wise player will beat a hasty retreat.

Of course the thieves' guild cannot allow any non-members to have such knowledge and live. They will send out their best assassins to find the character and kill him. The GM should terrorize the character, as would be killers lunge at him from dark shadows and otherwise hound him in the days and nights to come.

In my campaign, the targeted-player ended up arranging a meeting with the Guildmaster and working out a truce.

Mark York

For Honor's Sake

Hook: A character is waiting for his comrades to buy provisions and is killing time in a local tavern. While quaffing a mug of ale, a young wraith-like girl approaches him.

Line: The girl is near tears and tells the character that he has a kind face and she needs a favor. When asked to explain, the girl points to the corner of the room to where an old man is sharpening a sword with a stone and staring into space. She explains the old man is her father. Apparently the old man has been feuding with a neighbor and the two are planning a grudge-fight in a few moments. The old man's opponent has opted, as allowed by tradition, to have a younger, fitter man take his place in the fight. The girl is sure her feeble father will be killed. She shows the player a large red ruby set in a gold ring. It belonged to her now deceased mother, she explains. If the character will fight in her father's place, she will give it to him.

Sinker: Hopefully, the player will accept the challenge, either from greed or compassion. He might wish he hadn't when a few moments later his opponent shows up. The GM should go to great lengths describing this younger opponent as a muscle-bound warrior covered with battle scars and appearing to be quite confident. The young warrior should slightly outmatch the character, just enough to make the battle interesting and to cause the player to question the outcome. Without any comrades to intervene, the player's fate will rest in his own hands.

B.A. Felton ❑

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An Artist's Showcase

Greg Breault

Greg Breault is a free-lance illustrator in Daytona Beach, Florida. He began his career with Advanced Gaming in 1989, his senior year at Warwick Veterans High School. By journeying to GENCON six years in a row, Greg met the people to really make free-lancing interesting. These contacts opened up many doors such as *SHADIS* magazine, Awol Productions, and Task Force Games' *Prime Directive* and *Starfire*. Now Greg is currently trying to keep up the pace, eager to jab deeper into the world of free-lance illustration. His works have appeared in *Paper Mayhem*, *Redcap* Magazine, and *Scroll* Magazine's *Fantastic Art* and *Ghost Riders On the Storm*.

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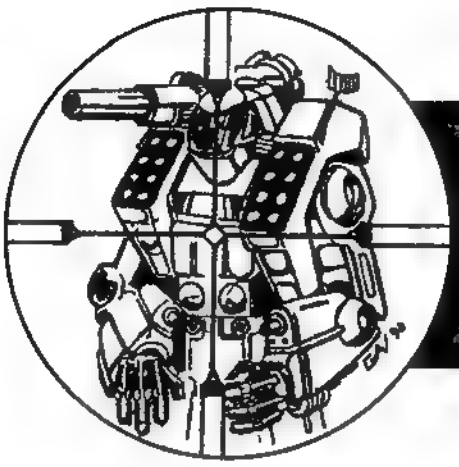

HOSTILES AT NINE O'CLOCK

Feature Review: Virtual World Center

By Jolly R. Blackburn

"The year is 3050. Man has colonized the universe. The once great Star League has degenerated into a corrupt feudal society riven by petty rivalries. Life is cheap. War is constant. Mercenaries equipped with futuristic two legged tanks called Battlemechs® drift from planet to planet fighting for whoever offers the most cash.

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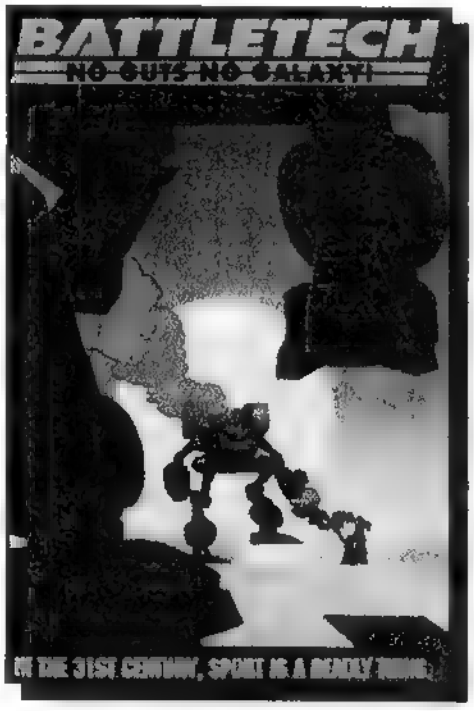
Dredger buttoned up into his Loki VI Battlemech and eased into the cockpit. His heart raced as the instrument panels roared to life. He made a quick scan of the system readouts, relieved to see that the troublesome heat-sink modulator appeared to be working properly again. This was his first real tournament. After months of simulator drills, Dredger had finally earned a position in the games. Countless hours of fighting with dampened lasers and dummy missiles did little to prepare him for the real thing.

He was about to enter a free-for-all, the deadliest game of them all. Only one Battlemech would remain on the field of battle at the conclusion; a fight to the death against seven other Battlemechs. The victor would go on to face other fresh opponents. The losers? Dredger didn't even want to think about it.

As his skilled fingers activated the Battlemech's weaponry, he mentally went over the lessons his mentor had drilled into him. He suddenly jumped as a Game Tech barked over the comm-line. "Heads you Slapmonkeys! Thirty seconds to hardball time!"

As the numbers were called out, Dredger practiced his grip on the throttle and fingered the trigger array.

Finally, a dull grinding sound echoed through the cockpit as the heavy, bay



doors slowly slid open. He began to sweat nervously as the harsh wind-blown plains of Solaris VII came into view.

The target-acquisition alarm began to hum almost immediately. Dredger swallowed hard as he watched the small white blips dance around on the radar screen. Six hostile battlemechs were already moving onto the battlefield and assuming their positions.Throwing the throttle forward, he felt the Loki respond agilely and move out from the safety of the bay. With his right hand he controlled the joystick, bringing the crosshairs on his view screen to bear on a Thor which was crossing his field of view. His computer identified the target, creating a smile on his face.

It was Single, a cocky young pilot from Antares. Moments before, he had boasted loudly in the cantina about his exploits. Sneering, he called Dredger a "farmboy." It was an insult Dredger was determined to extract payment for.

Single was approximately 1000 meters away and busily engaged with another mech. Letting loose a missile, Dredger tensed as it raced toward its target. A flash of light and a blossoming cloud of smoke signaled a hit. He roared with laughter and increased the throttle as he closed for a kill.

He flipped the commo switch. "That's how it's done back on the farm, Single!" he taunted.

"Too bad for you kid. And here I was going to take it easy on you today," a voice rang back.

Dredger eased up on the throttle as the distance closed. He had just armed a short-range missile, and was trying to steady the crosshairs, when the cockpit rattled and shook. The resounding report told him he had taken a hard hit. He scanned his readouts.

"Damn it!" he snapped. His lower torso had taken a direct hit. The controls were sluggish as the Battlemech's computers tried to compensate for the damage.

The comm-line came to life with laughter. "You're going down Dredger! You got a hostile at nine o'clock and I'm not in a merciful mood today."

Dredger swung the upper torso around and immediately fixed the crosshairs on this new threat. He let loose a volley of shots. He didn't have time to see if they hit. The target-acquisition computer told

him the new target was a Mechpilot named, Dreamtime.

Dredger braced himself for the fury to come, as the Battlemech's main guns began to blaze. A shower of sparks rained down on Dredger as part of his cockpit exploded in flames. He immediately turned his Battlemech around and tried to make an escape.

"I'm on your ass, Farmboy!"

Dredger looked down at the radar in panic – Dreamtime was directly behind him.

Dredger spun the upper torso of the Battlemech around. The Battlemech immediately came into view, but it was too late. He was immediately caught in a hailstorm of missiles and laser fire. The Loki shuddered and rocked. System lights flickered and turned from green to yellow and then red as they were terminated. He frantically began to flip an array of switches and buttons to bring on auxiliary and backup systems, but they didn't respond. He had lost this round. The Loki was a dead hulk. All he could do was try and save his own skin and live to fight another day.

Hitting the eject button, the cockpit ceiling was ripped away. A split second later Dredger was hurtled into the air and out of the field of fire. As he descended, he watched the ongoing battle in terror. Single was having his own problems. He had lost a left arm and his right leg had been reduced to rubble as a dark plume of smoke rose high into the air overhead.

As Dredger descended into the recovery area, he cursed himself. He felt a warm trickle on his cheek and reached up to investigate. His fingers came away, covered with blood. He had come a long way for such a short showing. Most pilots quit after their first brush with live rounds. Live combat had a way of weeding out the wanna-bes from the mechwarriors.

As Dredger headed back for the compound, he already knew what he was going to do. He was going to get back on the roster, acquire a new Battlemech, and try again.

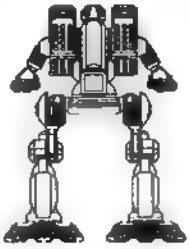
◆◆◆

The above story, with a little literary license, unfolded recently at the grand opening of the San Diego Virtual World Center.

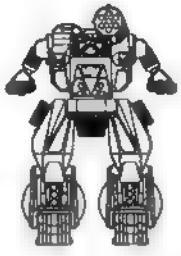
The SHADIS staff was invited to the pre-opening ceremonies, along with other members of the press, to go through the center and check things out first hand.

We were given an opportunity to talk with developers Tim Disney and Jordan Weisman about the future of the Virtual World Centers and related projects.

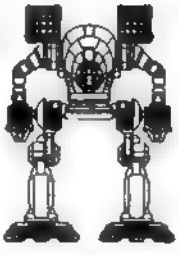
To pique your interest, let's take a walk through the center so you can get a feeling of what to expect for your $7.00 ticket.



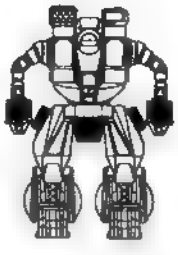
Vuture
Hit and Run Specialist



Thor
A Survivor, Good Close In



Madcat
Nimble, Lightly Armored



Loki
Versatile, Dangerous

A Walk Through

When you arrive at the complex, be prepared – reality is checked in at the door. From the moment you enter the facility, you will be entering a new world.

With Disney involved with the project, everything at the center has been designed to evoke a certain atmosphere. The employees dress and act like flight attendants. There is a sense of urgency as you are booked on your combat mission and receive your mission ticket.

Currently, you have two choices. You can run through a Battletech mission or a Red Planet mission. Red Planet is the newer scenario and involves racing with other pilots through the canals of Mars. This article concerns itself only with the Battletech portion. We hope to get back to San Diego to do the Red Planet portion and present our findings in a future issue.

After purchasing your ticket, you are quickly ushered to the pilots' lounge. Here you can order drinks and chat with other pilots while you nervously eyeball the mission board to see if your number is up.

The lounge itself is quite impressive. Charred fragments of Battlemechs were hanging from the rafters, grim reminders of the violent ends their pilots met. The walls are covered with pictures of famous pilots and pioneers in the field of virtual reality.

The designers of the Virtual World Center have created an elaborate pseudo-history that traces its founders back to the year 1895. As you browse through the photos on the wall, you will learn that the Virtual Geographic League was created by Alexander Graham Bell and Nikola Tesla. The old, yellowed photos show various VGL projects over the years. The center has done such an incredible job creating this backdrop that many players are under the impression that it's all true!

All around the lounge, hanging from the ceiling, are numerous monitors showing the on-going action of current missions.

Eventually, your mission number will pop up on the board. Don't worry, if you get caught up in conversation and miss your call, a technician (in uniform) will emerge from the in-briefing room and bel-

Mechpilot's Mission Debriefing Log

MISSION DE-BRIEFING FOR LOKI V1 PILOT

DREDGER

Score 817, BattleMech Kills 1, Times Destroyed 3

Thor V1: 1

Pilot	Mech	Score	Kills	Deaths	Dreamtime	Wavewear	Dredger	Single	Jimmy Z	Stoli	Weed	8
Dreamtime	Loki V1	3819	5	0	0/0	325/0	956/2	132/0	685/1	208/0	234/0	901/2
Wavewear	Thor V1	-970	2	4	44/0	0/0	497/0	130/0	1278/2	119/0	124/0	226/0
Dredger	**Loki V1**	**817**	**1**	**3**	**13/0**	**976/0**	**0/0**	**190/0**	**300/0**	**601/1**	**51/0**	**167/0**
Single	Thor V1	18	0	1	32/0	40/0	19/0	0/0	36/0	32/0	41/0	83/0
Jimmy Z	Loki V1	3946	6	3	414/0	2732/4	768/1	350/0	0/0	800/1	239/0	8/0
Stoli	Thor V1	-301	1	4	[illegible]	114/0	238/0	104/0	0/0	0/0	994/1	542/0
Weed	Loki V1	2160	4	1	117/0	201/0	3/0	359/1	66/0	1535/2	0/0	562/1
8	Thor V1	-1489	0	3	0/0	0/0	[illegible]	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Clan Wolf		1000	19	19								

MISSION LOG 9:57 PM, DECEMBER 2, 1993

10 minute daylight encounter, visibility 1100 meters.

1:02 Dreamtime vaporizes Jimmy Z's left torso!
1:02 Jimmy Z ejects as Dreamtime reduces Jimmy Z's Loki V1 to rubble!
2:00 Dredger vaporizes Wavewear's left upper leg!
2:03 Weed destroys Stoli's right arm!
2:08 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and vaporizes Single's missile pack!
2:10 Stoli's searchlight is vaporized by Weed!
2:11 Dredger's lower torso is shattered by Dreamtime!
2:11 Dredger ejects as Dreamtime reduces Dredger's Loki V1 to rubble!
2:14 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and destroys Wavewear's center torso!
2:14 Wavewear ejects as Jimmy Z reduces Wavewear's Thor V1 to [illegible]
2:14 Weed's right arm is shattered by Stoli!
2:23 Stoli's Thor V1 fires and vaporizes Weed's left arm!
2:25 Weed's Loki V1 fires and shatters Stoli's left torso!
2:25 Stoli ejects as Weed reduces Stoli's Thor V1 to rubble!
2:45 Jimmy Z shatters Single's right gun pod!
2:56 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and shatters Stoli's right gun pod!
3:06 Wavewear's Thor V1 fires and severely damages 8's hip section
3:06 Jimmy Z severely ravages Stoli's left torso
3:06 8's left torso is severely ravaged by Dredger
3:06 Wavewear's Thor V1 fires and vaporizes 8's left arm!
3:13 Stoli's left torso is severely ravaged by Jimmy Z
3:16 Stoli's left torso is shattered by Jimmy Z!
3:16 Stoli ejects as Jimmy Z reduces Stoli's Thor V1 to rubble!
3:21 Dreamtime severely wounds 8's right gun pod
3:26 Dreamtime's Loki V1 fires and destroys 8's left torso!
3:26 8 ejects as Dreamtime reduces 8's Thor V1 to rubble!
3:29 Dredger's Loki V1 fires and severely damages Wavewear's left upper leg
3:36 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely damages Dredger's center torso
3:36 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely ravages Dredger's center torso
3:47 Jimmy Z severely ravages Dredger's left torso
3:54 Dredger's Loki V1 fires and severely ravages Wavewear's left torso
4:00 Jimmy Z vaporizes Wavewear's left gun pod!
4:06 Jimmy Z severely wounds Dredger's searchlight
4:14 Stoli severely wounds Single's right arm
4:16 Dreamtime's Loki V1 fires and severely damages Wavewear's center torso
4:18 Dredger's left torso is shattered by Jimmy Z!
4:18 Dredger ejects as Jimmy Z reduces Dredger's Loki V1 to rubble!
4:21 8's center torso is severely wounded by Stoli
4:27 Dreamtime's Loki V1 fires and destroys Jimmy Z's left arm!
4:36 8's center torso is severely damaged by Stoli
4:55 Stoli's Thor V1 fires and severely wounds 8's hip section
5:02 Jimmy Z severely wounds Single's right arm
5:03 Dreamtime's Loki V1 fires and severely damages Dredger's center torso
5:10 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely ravages Single's lower torso
5:14 Dredger severely wounds Jimmy Z's left lower leg
5:17 Wavewear's Thor V1 fires and destroys 8's missile pack!
5:20 Stoli severely wounds Dredger's right gun pod
5:23 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely damages Single's right torso
5:24 Dredger shatters Stoli's missile pack!
5:25 Dredger's Loki V1 fires and severely ravages Stoli's left torso
5:29 Dredger's Loki V1 fires and severely ravages Stoli's lower torso
5:29 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely wounds Weed's right torso
5:43 Stoli severely ravages Dredger's left arm
5:44 Dreamtime's Loki V1 fires and severely damages Stoli's center torso
5:51 Stoli severely wounds Dredger's right torso
6:07 Jimmy Z's center torso is severely wounded by Wavewear
6:10 Wavewear's right gun pod is severely ravaged by Jimmy Z
6:10 Stoli's Thor V1 fires and severely wounds Weed's lower torso
6:28 Jimmy Z shatters Wavewear's left upper leg!
6:34 Jimmy Z's center torso is severely wounded by Wavewear
6:34 8's left arm is vaporized by Dreamtime!
6:41 Stoli destroys Weed's lower torso!
6:41 Weed ejects as Stoli reduces Weed's Loki V1 to rubble!
6:42 Wavewear severely damages Jimmy Z's hip section
6:43 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and vaporizes Wavewear's center torso!
6:43 Wavewear ejects as Jimmy Z reduces Wavewear's Thor V1 to rubble!
6:43 Dreamtime's Loki V1 fires and shatters 8's left torso!
6:43 8 ejects as Dreamtime reduces 8's Thor V1 to rubble!
6:49 Stoli's lower torso is severely wounded by Dredger
6:57 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely damages Dreamtime's right lower leg
7:03 Weed's Loki V1 fires and severely damages 8's left torso
7:04 Single's right arm is shattered by Stoli!
7:05 Dredger severely ravages Single's right lower leg
7:12 8's missile pack is vaporized by Weed!
7:13 Weed destroys 8's left torso!
7:13 8 ejects as Weed reduces 8's Thor V1 to rubble!
7:18 Wavewear severely wounds Jimmy Z's hip section
7:22 Weed's right gun pod is severely damaged by Dredger
7:24 Jimmy Z's center torso is destroyed by Wavewear!
7:24 Jimmy Z ejects as Wavewear reduces Jimmy Z's Loki V1 to rubble!
7:24 Stoli severely damages Single's lower torso
7:32 Weed severely damages Stoli's left upper leg
7:37 Wavewear severely ravages Jimmy Z's right upper leg
7:40 Jimmy Z severely wounds Wavewear's right arm
7:47 Weed destroys Stoli's lower torso!
7:47 Stoli ejects as Weed reduces Stoli's Thor V1 to rubble!
7:50 Jimmy Z severely ravages Wavewear's lower torso
7:53 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and shatters Wavewear's lower torso!
7:53 Wavewear ejects as Jimmy Z reduces Wavewear's Thor V1 to rubble!
8:14 Stoli's left torso is severely damaged by Jimmy Z
8:24 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely wounds Weed's center torso
8:32 Jimmy Z severely damages Weed's right lower leg
8:36 Dredger's center torso is shattered by Dreamtime!
8:36 Dredger ejects as Dreamtime reduces Dredger's Loki V1 to rubble!
8:48 Jimmy Z severely damages Wavewear's right lower leg
8:55 Jimmy Z severely damages Wavewear's right gun pod
8:59 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and shatters Wavewear's right lower leg!
9:06 Dredger's Loki V1 fires and vaporizes Stoli's left torso!
9:06 Stoli ejects as Dredger reduces Stoli's Thor V1 to rubble!
9:09 Wavewear's left torso is severely ravaged by Jimmy Z
9:11 Wavewear's Thor V1 fires and severely damages Jimmy Z's right lower leg
9:11 Dredger severely wounds Wavewear's left torso
9:12 Weed's Loki V1 fires and vaporizes Single's lower torso!
9:12 Single ejects as Weed reduces Single's Thor V1 to rubble!
9:14 Wavewear's Thor V1 fires and severely ravages Jimmy Z's center torso
9:19 Jimmy Z severely wounds Wavewear's lower torso
9:25 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and shatters Wavewear's left torso!
9:25 Wavewear ejects as Jimmy Z reduces Wavewear's Thor V1 to rubble!
9:49 Wavewear severely ravages Jimmy Z's right arm
9:50 Weed severely wounds Dreamtime's left upper leg
9:53 Jimmy Z's Loki V1 fires and severely ravages Wavewear's lower torso
9:53 Jimmy Z's center torso is vaporized by Wavewear!
9:53 Jimmy Z ejects as Wavewear reduces Jimmy Z's Loki V1 to rubble!
9:56 Dreamtime's searchlight is destroyed by Weed!
9:56 Stoli severely damages Wavewear's right arm

low out your mission number, informing you that it is "last call!" for your mission.

If you are a rookie pilot, you will be asked to provide a handle or callsign for your Battlemech. Then you and seven others will be led to the briefing room and given a ten minute crash course on piloting a Battlemech. The briefing includes a short film starring Judge Reinhold and Joan Severance. The film sets up the situation for the mission you are about to embark on and gets the adrenaline flowing.

After the film, a labcoat technician will give you a little one-on-one coaching on the Battlemech controls. If you've already mastered the basics in a previous engagement, you may be pulled to the side to learn the advanced features, check out the weather, view maps, or access stats on your Battlemech.

Soon enough you will be led to the virtual reality pods. The call sign you chose will be displayed in red LED letters on your pod. As you ease into the cockpit and slide the pod door closed, you'll find your heart is beating faster. The illusion is convincing.

Before you, will be a staggering array of buttons, switches, LED displays, and panels. Don't worry, even though every button and switch has a purpose, you won't need all of them. In basic mode only the joystick and throttle are needed to pilot your Battlemech. In advanced modes you can engage Torso-twisting (which allows you to pivot your Battlemech's upper torso like a tank turret), switch weapon systems, and reconfigure various systems.

You can also activate a commo-switch and talk to the other pilots on your mission.

The Basic game takes place in an arena where it's pretty much a free-for-all, with only one champion emerging. The action is quick and bloody. Expect to get killed very quickly. No need to worry though, when your mech is destroyed you will immediately be ejected and put into a fresh mech. You gain points for kills and damage. You lose points for being killed and taking damage.

After your ten minute battle you will be ushered to the debriefing area. Here you will get a hard copy readout of the battle. The readout lists the action second by second, showing who hit whom.

During the debriefing you will also be shown several computer monitors that replay the battle as it progressed. This is a valuable chance to learn where you went wrong. It's also the highlight of the whole mission. People who were complete strangers moments before are suddenly laughing and sharing notes. The type of bonding that can only be made under fire.

If you are like most players, you will immediately begin digging through your pockets for more cash as you head back to the ticket counter.

Dredger's Notebook

Okay, I signed up as a mechpilot under the callsign "Dredger." It was a pretty humbling affair. I had the tar beat out of me. Most of the mistakes I made are common and I've learned from them.

So let me pass on my little bit of combat experience to save you the same kind of grief.

Keep Moving! This is harder than it sounds. You have a tendency to stop your Battlemech so you can line up your sights on others. This makes you a sitting duck and every other mech within range is going to target you. Keep moving and change directions often.

Wait For A Call Sign. Your Battlemech has a wonderful target acquisition feature. When you put the crosshairs on a target, its callsign flashes below the crosshairs. If you can see a callsign you are on target. If you can't see one, then you are going to miss.

Keep Your Crosshairs on the Horizon. 95% of all targets will appear on the horizon. Keeping your crosshairs in the middle of the screen will give you the advantage.

Aim for the Dark. At closer ranges, you will be able to distinguish light and dark patches on enemy mechs. Dark patches represent damaged areas. Aim for these dark areas – they are the most vulnerable

Don't Close In. This is also a tough lesson to learn. Beginning pilots like to run toward their enemies and pound it out face to face. This will get you killed quicker than anything else. The clever pilots stay disengaged and in the distance. This makes it easy to fire into the other jerks who are standing toe-to-toe and pounding it out.

◆ ◆ ◆

Well, slapmonkeys, that's about all I can do to prepare you for your mission If you ever hit the cantina, the drinks are on me ❑

COMING NEXT ISSUE

CHECK OUT OUR SUBSCRIPTION SPECIAL ON PAGE 54 OF THIS ISSUE!

Battletech™
A compelling and exciting new adventure for FASA's hit role-playing game

Taggers™
A new character class for your Dark Future role-playing game

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A complete ship-to-ship combat and planetary conquest game

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The long awaited return of J.D. Webster's classic comic strip

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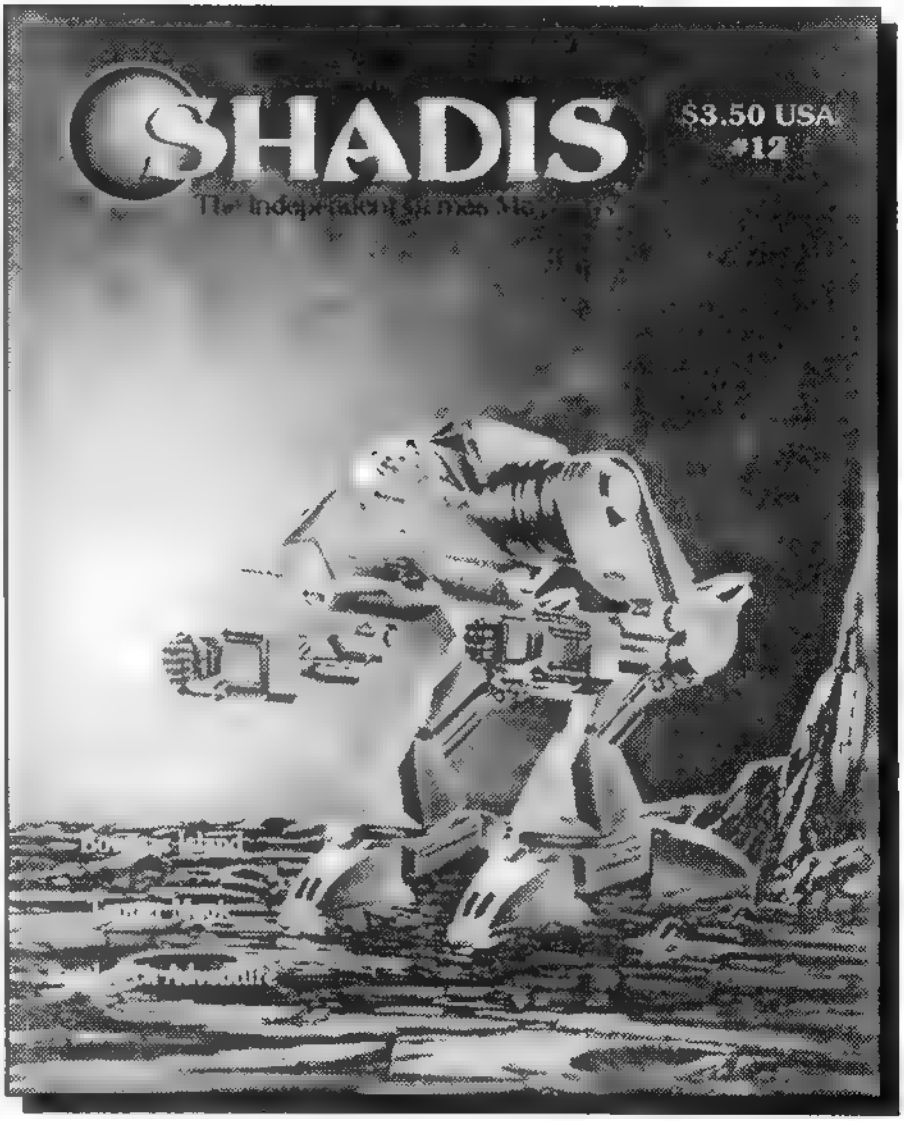


CLOSER LOOK

Reviews: Games, Books...

Dream Park
R. Talsorian
RPG System
Reviewed by Chad Auld

There are all kinds of novels on the market right now that are based on game systems, and many systems have licensed products from popular authors. ***Dream Park the Role-playing Game*** is one such licensed product, based on the novels by Larry Niven and Steve Barnes. The setting, in future America, is a large amusement park, named – you guessed it – ***Dream Park***. Unlike Disneyland, its main attraction is live-action role-playing on a grand scale. Futuristic technology, including holograms and gargantuan sets, combine with actors to create a realistic experience. Famous Gamemasters mix and match genres, combining anything imaginable to confound the equally diverse players. While the cost to run a game is prohibitive, the park recovers their expenses by selling home versions, movie and book rights. People come from all over the world to take part in games and play for game points. As point totals rise, so do the player's fame and personal marketing potential. The ***Dream Park*** novels are an excellent read and the game, designed by Mike Pondsmith, captures their spirit very accurately.

First, the book itself is very attractive, filled with illustrations to help you understand how the park looks, feels, and works. Characters from the novels, as well as the authors and Mike Pondsmith, make an appearance to guide you through the various sections of the book. Included is a park overview, quick start rules with three combat based mini-adventures, advanced character creation and rules, lists with descriptions of all the optional skills and gear available, an introductory adventure, a section detailing adventure creation, and a section on playing outside the park.

Dream Park the RPG is a game within a game, where the GM can play a different Gamemaster and players get to change skills and equipment in each game. That's right – even the GM switches personas and the players' characters have an out-of-game profession. Sound complicated? It isn't. Depending on how you look at it, this is either the game's greatest attribute or its major failing.

On the upside, the simplicity gives you the freedom to allow space knights, wizards, mobsters, gunslingers, super heroes, and virtually anything else you could want to, go head to head. Ever wanted to play cyberpunk while others in your group were calling for horror or fantasy? On the downside, there is a sacrifice in realism. Character generation is kept minimal so that you can customize your character with options bought with game points, for each adventure. There are nine character templates and each is made up of the same ten basic skills with starting values that range from one to four, plus three customization points. Options include skills, magic spells, clerical spells, psionic powers, superpowers, gadgets, and gear. To maintain game balance, weapons are rated in damage classes from very light to cosmic, with a Titanic Bite and a Nuclear Weapon doing the same damage. Armor is treated in the same manner – Plate Mail and a Personal Force Field offering the same protection.

Both combat and non-combat resolution is quite simple, allowing the game to proceed at a smooth pace. Combat is a contest roll. The attacker rolls a d6 + modifiers and adds the result to the appropriate skill level. The defender also rolls and adds either his dodge or parry skill, with the higher score winning. In the event of a tie, the defender wins. When a hit lands, a roll is made on the wound table to find the damage done. The rules for multiple target and special effect attacks are easily resolved as well. Non-combat actions use a similar system, with the GM setting a difficulty rating from 6=easy to 14=extremely hard for the action to be attempted. The person taking the action then rolls d6 and adds the level of the pertinent skill. If the resulting score is greater than the difficulty rating, the player succeeds.

Spells and psionics also require a skill roll. To see if they take effect, a d6 roll is made and added to your skill with that power. If the result is seven or better, it works. There is a bit of a hitch here: every time you use a spell/power your skill is reduced by one level and there is no way to recover the levels until the adventure is over. This can leave a character very vulnerable in the closing stages of a long scenario.

If you die in adventure, all is not lost – remember you are playing a person who is role-playing a character. This does not mean that death in Dream Park is totally painless. When your character dies it results in a loss of game points. In the event of death, you lose half of your total game points. There is a way to cut this loss: you can reenter the game as a "Zombie" for the GM, and only say goodbye to a quarter of those precious points. This doesn't mean that you instantly become a rotting chunk of meat on legs, you just play an NPC for the rest of the

game. As for regaining the other lost points, there is always the next adventure.

At the end of an adventure you are awarded game points for nasties defeated and goals achieved, plus bonus points. The bonus points are determined by means of a secret ballot where all the players – dead, as well as surviving – and the GM, rate each other's play.

When I first read ***Dream Park the RPG***, I was unsure how my players would react to such an unusual game. They caught on to the character creation and game mechanics with a minimum of fuss and we were soon up and running. Skill resolution, both combat and non, ran smoothly and, despite a few minor problems, the introductory adventure proved quite workable. One of the players was killed out, reentered play as a "Zombie" and seemed to enjoy that as much as playing his own character. At the end of play the players handed in their secret ballots, they really liked the idea, and game points were awarded. The general consensus on the game was positive; the simple mechanics were a nice break from the systems we normally play. While everybody was interested in playing the game again, we agreed that it could never capture our interest to the degree our "serious" campaign has.

Mecha!
Seventh Street Games
RPG System
Reviewed by Dirk DeJong

Once in a while you find a game that, no matter how interesting the premise or well executed the parts, just can't quite live up to its promise. ***Mecha!*** is one such creation. Perfect bound, with interesting cover art, ***Mecha!*** appears, on the surface, to answer the prayers of those who are into mecha combat, but were disappointed with *BattleTech* and who felt that the mecha rules in *Mekton* didn't quite live up to the rest of the game. It promises two separate campaigns and role-playing. It delivers on some of those promises, but not others.

Looking to the promise of action for role-players, forget it. ***Mecha!*** has role-playing, but only to the extent of keeping track of a mecha pilot's piloting and gunnery skills, his rank, any special combat skills that he might gain, and what his personal mecha colors are. This is not an RPG – no matter what the back cover might say.

The two different campaign backgrounds are one based on the basic rules, in which you and your opponents play nameless empires (unless you want to put together a detailed background) who are trying to pound each other into mecha scrap; and another, much more interesting campaign, based on a spacegoing Aztec mecha culture. Unless you are really into making your own background, or ripping one off from somewhere else, the Aztec-based campaign is interesting and has the nice point of not being a ripoff. There are also plans for a number of other cultures that will enable you to have a full-fledged campaign with different cultures involved, each with its own strengths, weaknesses, and style.

The mecha combat rules are standard miniatures rules, with seemingly little to point them out as better or worse than other mecha-style combat systems. (Although talking with the designer revealed that there are a number of sister games planned or in production that will allow a much more detailed treatment of powersuits, armored vehicles, fighters, large ships, and a number of inter-locking campaigns.) And although the ranged weapons system is excellently done, with the ability to custom design your weapons from scratch, there are few choices as far as hand-to-hand weapons go. While the current incarnation of ***Mecha!*** limits you to designs of 100 to 600 points, seemingly in 100 point increments, the designer assured me that you are not locked into those limits.

Even with good rules for combining ground, air, and space combat, ***Mecha!***, on its own, just can't seem to go that one extra step that makes a good game great. Though it has a number of good points (like the Aztec background), without the support of its sister games it doesn't quite have that little bit extra. Perhaps the only part that is excellent simply on its own, is the section on making and painting miniatures, and putting together a battleground. The photos are good, and the advice worth listening to, even if you have been doing miniatures for a while.

As to whether or not you should buy ***Mecha!***, I have to recommend this only to those who are really into mecha miniatures, and can live with the mecha design constraints. The basic combat system is good (though it does have its gaps) and really is one of your few alternatives for mecha wargaming if you don't like *BattleTech*. On its own, ***Mecha!*** is good but incomplete.

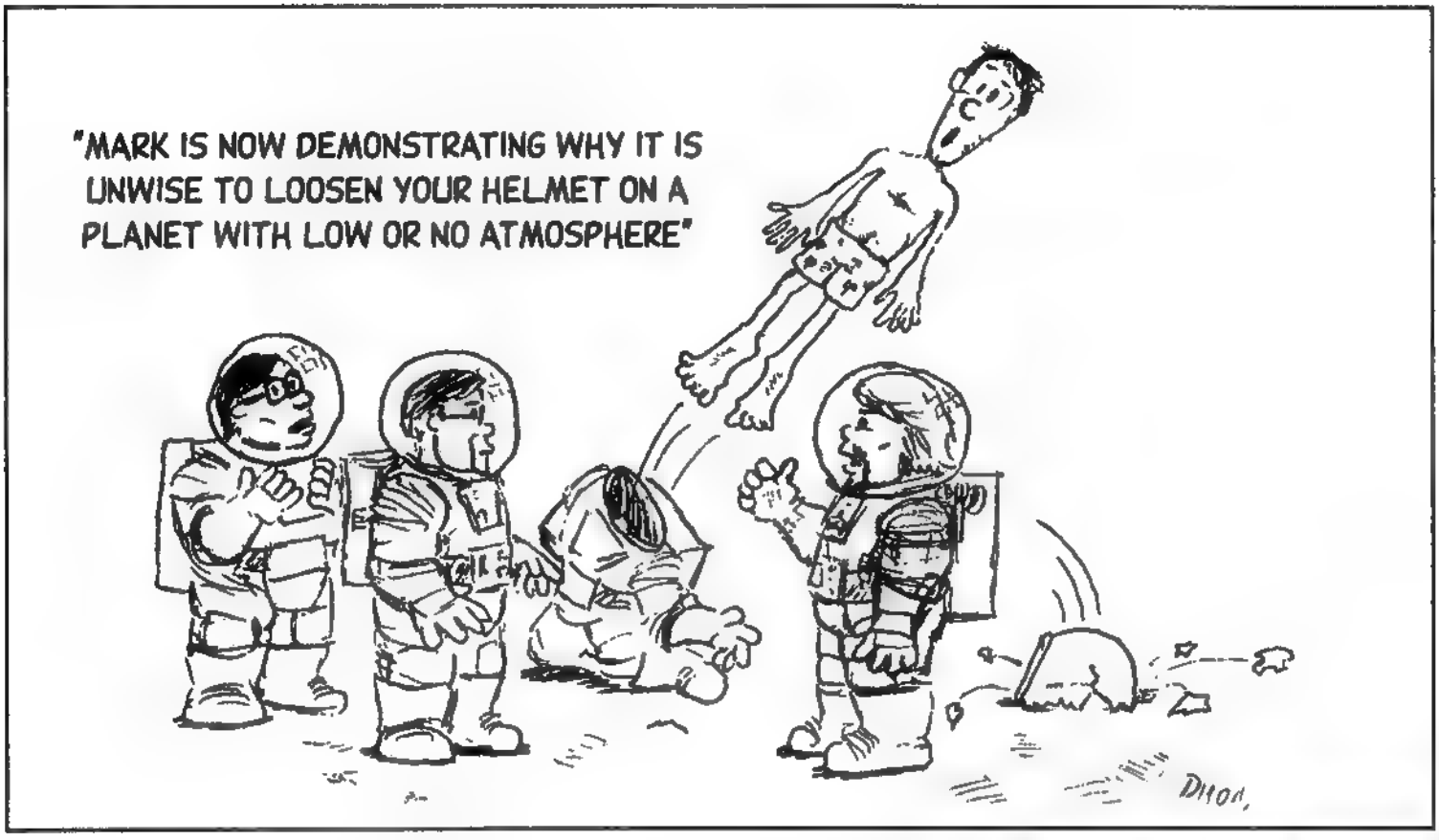
With a little time, refinement, and additions from Seventh Street, it could grow into the definitive mecha combat system.

Over The Edge
Atlas Games
RPG System
Reviewed by Dirk DeJong

When dealing with the smaller game companies today, you learn to not be surprised at the oftimes non-conformists games they print. Atlas Games has the latest non-conformist to reach print, ***Over The Edge***.

Over The Edge (OTE) is a misfit because it doesn't obey many gaming industry conventions and because the genre can best be described as "National Enquirer: The Role-playing Game." Seriously, it's a world at the level of the "I was abducted by aliens to be Elvis's love slave in 1933" stories in the tabloids. After months of thinking, I've come to the conclusion that either: (1) this is a genre that has been overlooked and more designers need to pay attention to it, or (2) this is the beginning of the end for role-playing as we know it, when games sink to this level.

OTE's system has no character classes, no stats, and no lists of skills, powers, equipment, etc. This is the most free-form character design system I've ever run across. You decide what your character's personality, history, etc. is, then either pick from a very small list (included as examples) of powers and skills, or design your own. Skills and powers can be anything, within the GM's limits. Other limits are the number of die advantage a trait gives you (most skills get three dice, most powers one or two), the number of powers and/or skills you start out with (three for starters), and the one bad trait you take to balance your character. Proper character design is supremely important



because, if you get an bad character, it's your fault not the die's.

Combat is simple, with die multipliers for weapons and/or combat advantages like special training or physical prowess. Also, virtually no firearms are used. The idea is to make combat less of a focus than other systems do. It works well and, while not something an orc smasher would drool over, gets the job done with style.

In such a non-system, the background takes on even more importance, and ***OTE*** is an impressive product. Al Amarja (the island where the game takes place) is a strange and eclectic mixture of various peoples, cultures, etc. brought together with various conspiracies, whose goals run the gamut of human and non-human motives. Few systems want, or need, the level of background detail provided, ranging from hundreds of well-developed NPCs to the stores lining most of the streets. This is the best feature of ***OTE*** in my mind.

On the down side, ***OTE*** is a highly intensive game. You just cannot play it with a pickup group, and still get the full experience. The system is too loose to feel good unless you spend time getting into your character's head and the background. But this is more a cautionary note than a fault with ***OTE***. The other problem lies with the fact that while drugs are illegal, they're so prevalent and accepted that many pages are devoted to their description, effect, costs, methods and places to obtain them, etc. They're a major part of this game. While I know that putting one's head in a hole and pretending drugs don't exist, especially in a culture as decadent as Al Amarja, is naive in the extreme, the importance of drugs in ***OTE*** makes me wonder if an RPG is the proper place for such elements.

Still, if you're in the market for something unlike any other game out there, are willing to invest some time and effort into making it work, and appreciate the macabre sense of humor found in Al Amarja, then ***Over The Edge*** could very well be the RPG you need to bring back some of the fun you remember from those first giddy days of dungeon-crawling and orc-bashing. In the meantime, I'm going back.

Viper
Hero Games/I.C.E. Inc.
RPG System
Reviewed by Mark Arsenault

Viper. The very name brings back humorous memories from my early *Champions* campaign. When I thought "Viper," I thought of poorly disciplined, maniacal (almost comical) green-suited thugs. Granted, thugs with blasters, but thugs nonetheless. Their agents were seldom good for anything but cannon fodder and plot devices. No more.

With the release of ***Viper***, Scott Bennie has actually taken the shoddy organization and whipped it into something of a credible force (probably intended to be this way from the beginning). Truth be told, ***Viper*** is now a *very* credible threat for our heroes, and the world in general. ***Viper*** has become much more than some green enigmatic force – it's now a detailed organization, with an intricate command structure.

The book contains a very thorough background of ***Viper***, including its dark

origins in post-WW2 all the way to the present. The organization's history is presented in a descriptive manner, giving us insight into not just the "whats," but the "whys" of ***Viper***. The organization is broken down into geographical regions and details each individual nest leader, and other major players. Also included is ***Viper***'s "Top Ten Wanted" list (along with the reasons why), and an outline of ***Viper***'s relations with other agencies and NPCs.

Along with dozens of new villains, the book contains templates of an assortment of ***Viper*** agents, as well as dozens of new gadgets and weapons. The book is worth its price for just the NPCs and equipment alone! One of the highlights of the book, for me, was to actually discover who the Supreme Serpent was! (No, I'm not going to spoil it for you.) The authors have also added a section suggesting ways for GMs to run different types of ***Viper*** campaigns, from using ***Viper*** as real nasty terrorist-types, to running them as actual good guys! Add to all of that an adventure or two, and you've got one jam-packed *Champions* supplement. With a wealth of information inside, this book is sure to be an often-used addition to your *Champions* library. My only disappointment with the book was discovering that it already has an errata (conveniently downloaded from the *Red October* BBS). Otherwise, I enjoyed it very much. In fact, I have based some of the agents in my current mini-campaign on several ***Viper*** agents from this book.

My recommendation? If you don't use ***Viper*** much in your campaign, you might do well to pass this book up. Except that you'll be missing out on dozens of new NPC villains, agents, and gadgets to harass (and hurt) your heroes with! If you enjoy using ***Viper*** in your campaign, or ***Viper*** plays a significant role in your campaign, then this book is definitely worth your while.

Star Wars RPG, 2d Ed.
West End Games
RPG System
Reviewed by Mark Arsenault

The 176-page book is saddlestitched and hardbound. It seems to be durable and well made, which is becoming increasingly uncommon with hard-back books these days. The cover is rather plain, with the title and a picture of Darth Vader's helmet on a blue field, but serves its purpose. After all, we're all familiar with this game's subject matter!

The interior art by John Paul Lona and Allen Nunis, both regular artists for the ***Star Wars*** line, is all black and white line art. Allen's artwork shines, as usual. It is sharp and captures the drama of the game, but occasional drawings show overuse of lines, making the picture look "crowded." John's art, while good in its own right, seems to be missing that sense of power and action common to Allen's work. However, all of the art does add to the book and enhances the topics adequately.

There are also several pages of full-color, glossy "mock advertisements" in the book. While they are apparently intended to add flavor, they seem strangely out of place in a rules book, and actually add little.

The text looks like ten point serif, and is easy enough to read. Standard RPG book text here. It's printed in two column format, with bold and larger print to mark chapter and section headers. All of the charts and special rule summaries are bordered, making them easy to spot on the page (important when you need that chart in the middle of a combat scene).

The chapters are poorly organized, feeding you information before you need it or (in some cases) know what to do with it. For example, there is a chapter on GMing, including a short sample adventure, which is located before the chapter on basic game mechanics (like combat, skill rolls, etc.). The result is an occasional group of rules that are difficult to understand until later in the book. Being a second edition, I would have expected better organization.

In the game, characters are created using "templates" (much like FASA's *Shadowrun*), with all stats and skills using a "die" system rather than just numerical scores. The six attributes include Dexterity, Knowledge, Mechanical, Perception, Strength, and Technical. For scores, the PC is rated in numbers of dice (eg; "3D" equals three dice). By the way, the game uses only six-sided dice. The attributes represent the character's potential in a given area rather than a concrete "score" or limit.

Skills are organized according to which attribute they fall under. For example, most combat skills fall under Dexterity, technical skills fall under.... Well, you get the idea. To successfully use a skill, the character rolls the number of dice indicated for that skill. If the total of the dice is equal to or greater than the difficulty number assigned to the task, the skill use is successful. The process is called a "Test."

One rather unique feature of this game is the use of a "wild die." That is, whenever a player must make a die roll, one is designated the wild die (usually by using a die of a different color, etc.). If the player rolls two through five, it is simply added to the others like normal. If the wild die comes up a six, the player adds the number to the total and rolls the wild die again (yes, you keep rolling if you get another six). If the wild die is a one, then the player receives some mishap; either a penalty to the roll or some complication (decided by the GM), such as an exploding gun or some other event that disrupts the PC's plans! For example: A player rolls three dice. The two normal dice come up four and three, and the wild die is a six. The player re-rolls the wild die, rolling a four. The total roll is 4+3+6+4, or 17! Combat takes place the same way, with the person being hit rolling his Strength dice, and subtracting the result from the attacker's roll. The difference is used to determine what level of damage the victim receives, if any. No hit points here. Just wound levels (reminiscent of one of West End's earlier games, *Paranoia*). Combat is divided into rounds, each about five seconds long. It's not the most realistic system for combat, but ***Star Wars*** is designed as a fast paced adventure game. It doesn't try to be more, and tells you so early on.

The game, itself, is run in a cinematic style, with time between combat referred to as "scenes" and GMs encouraged to describe "off camera" encounters to increase the feeling of the players taking part in a movie. While it seems a bit trite at first, it works well in play if done right. Role-playing is definitely emphasized here.

The game background is thorough, and the ***Star Wars*** universe is explained well enough that even someone who hasn't seen the movies can understand it (if such a person were to exist). The game

also devotes a complete section on Jedi characters and the Force, both the light and dark side.

One noticeable feature, however, is the lack of starship and NPC write-ups in the book. Just one or two ships for the major classes (fighter, freight, capitol, etc.) are presented. Although there are sixteen character templates in the back of the book, none of the classic *Star Wars* characters are present. They are found in supplement books, of which there are many (and more planned). Be warned – you will likely need quite a bit of money if you plan to dive into this supplement-heavy game system.

What's my recommendation? Despite its flaws, ***Star Wars*** accomplishes what it sets out to do – to give the players a chance to role-play in the exciting ***Star Wars*** universe. It's especially great for people who hate using complex math formulas to create their characters! I enjoyed reading the book and I will soon begin running my own ***Star Wars*** mini-campaign. If you enjoyed the *Star Wars* movies and are looking for a fast and easy game to play, then I recommend picking up this one.

Full Thrust
Ground Zero Games
Miniature Rules
Reviewed by Dirk DeJong

The first time I picked up ***Full Thrust*** I had no idea that I'd picked up one of those rarest of games, one that does everything as nearly right as humanly possible.

A magazine-style book, ***Full Thrust*** appears, on the surface, to be a trifle flimsy to fulfill all this promise, but trust me, it does. Even though it's only forty-eight pages, including the rather detailed background description and a brief history of space miniatures, it manages to pack in an excellent playing system designed for squadron and small fleet battles (if you're looking to command the 3rd Intergalactic Megafleet in mortal combat with the Empire's dreaded Imperial Death Fleet, try something else), a well-planned ship design system that doesn't bog you down in meaningless minutiae, and a campaign setting complete with trial battles. And it's a good idea of the work that went into this system to realize that they've managed to bring all this in in a package that retails for less than $12.00. The rules are divided into a "core" section which has all the basic movement, combat and building rules, and an "advanced" section which adds new weapons and more advanced ship options. There are even some advanced optional rules. In spite of the wealth of detail (i.e., fighters vs. anti-fighter defenses, mines vs. minesweeping, weapons vs. shielding, and enough weapon types so you even have the choice of more damage vs. a better hit probability), there are no, repeat no, tables to have to memorize and constantly refer to. This, more than any other aspect of the game system, has endeared it to me, as it enables you to play most of a game, complete with detailed and different ship types, in a very short period of time. Most games that can claim to play most or all of a game in an evening have very little differentiation in ship capabilities.

While the campaign background definitely reflects both its English background as well as what would normally be considered politically incorrect thinking (namely that the U.S. and England will eventually face off against Russia and China in space), it's well done and provides a good rationale for different ship designs, fleet compositions, strategy and tactics. Ground Zero also has a complete line of miniatures designed around this campaign setting.

As to whether or not you should buy ***Full Thrust***, if you like miniatures, space combat, or just plain well-written rules, I recommend this with the highest praise. If Ground Zero's companion rules for ground combat are anywhere near as good as these, I think that a new star may have just risen on the miniatures horizon. With short, well thought out rules at a fantastic price, I see no reason not to rush out and buy a copy as soon as you can.

The Art of Role-Playing Vol. One: The Player & His Role
Ragnorak Enterprises
RPG Discussion
Reviewed by Tony Lee

Anybody can create characters, but not everybody can create memorable characters. ***The Player & His Role*** tries to rectify that with essays on how to flesh out characters, while steering the readers down a path of defining their creations by personality, not gold pieces or magic items.

This is volume one of the ***The Art of Role-Playing*** series, inspired by the authors' own popular convention seminar on better role-playing. The essays, though unprofessionally typo-ridden, are enjoyable "think pieces" on the process of character creation. The authors discuss the basic building blocks of a character and attempt to motivate players to think beyond numbers by exploring the background of each fantasy character class (Warrior, Mage, Priest, Outlaw) individually, raising pointers and questions along the way to guide as well as challenge the players.

Among the wide topics covered, the highlight is undoubtedly a Middle Age/Renaissance conduct and belief system presented in the essay, "Value & Vice." It's an excellent choice to supplant the old alignment system. Most other topics, ranging from Gamemaster role-playing to totems for primitive cultures are described to satisfaction, although I do feel the application of phobias in a campaign from the piece, "Whom the God Destroys," could be elaborated on some more.

There may not be any real eye-opening revelation for an experienced player, but the advice herein is invaluable to beginners or anyone long stuck in power gaming mode, who would like to add dimension to the characters. Also, at a suggested price of $6.95, a couple more articles would make its thin twenty-five page body more economically appealing to buyers.

Realms of the Unknown
The Walnut Group
RPG System
Reviewed by Tony Lee

Computer gamers have *SimCity*. Boardgamers have *Civilization*. Now, the role-playing gamers finally get their shot at leading a population through trials and tribulations thanks to ***Realms of the Unknown*** (***ROTU***) by The Walnut Group. To play, you need both the Player's and Realm Controller's Manual. The idea behind ***ROTU*** is for players to create their own realms instead of single characters, then develop the populations through economic, social, and political activities and interactions in the form of written

"orders" to the Gamemaster (called *Realm Controller* or *RC*), who will process everybody's orders and decide their outcomes.

It's a thinking game that takes careful planning to succeed; any desultory barbarian horde is sure to die out. Each population is rated in areas such as People, Raw Materials, Produced Goods, Natural Resources, etc. It's the player's responsibility to monitor the progress and determine the best course of action to take (i.e. increase agricultural production to counter food shortage, or trade excess resources with another realm). There's plenty of room for creativity, as anything from technological advancement and exploration of neighboring lands, to full-scale conflict against another population is well within possibility. In fact, count on all these to happen!

On the down side, the books make no provision for running a "high fantasy" setting, i.e. dragons, trolls, elves, wizards and the like. Had that been included, it would have better justified the price (eight dollars for twenty-four pages will set off an average buyer's alarm. RC's Manual is more reasonably priced at $15 for eighty-some pages by comparison). Nevertheless, ***ROTU*** can be a very engaging game, and the fact that each player can submit moves at his own pace makes the game even easier to get into.

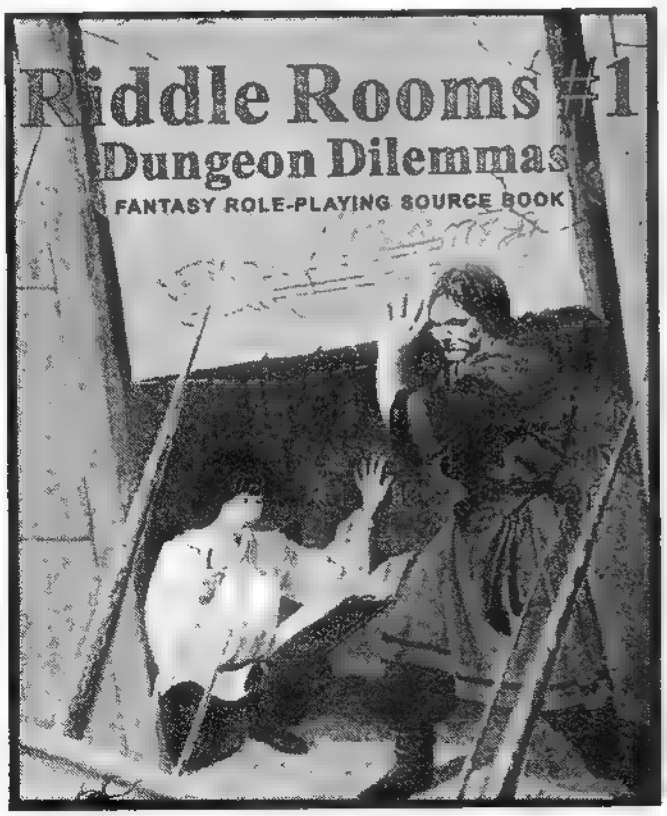
Star Wars: The Movie Trilogy Sourcebook
West End Games
RPG Discussion
Reviewed by Mark Arsenault

Fans of WEG's *Star Wars RPG* will no doubt know all about this book, and many may have purchased it without the benefit of having read this review. I can't say that I blame them, nor can I say they made a poor decision.

The Movie Trilogy Sourcebook is a color, glossy hard-bound book. Its 158 pages include updated and revised information from the earlier *Galaxy Guides 1, 3* and *5*. Also included are game stats and background for more than 100 characters and character types (yes, I said more than 100) from the three movies. Looking for the stats for Luke, Han or Leia? They're all here, with separate versions for all three films. Want Jabba's stats? Got 'em. Salacious Crumb? He's here, too. The book also includes stats for both Death Stars and Boba Fett's Slave I, but no other starships or vehicles. This was of little concern, as most of the staple ships are outlined in the *Star Wars 2d Ed. RPG* book. There are, however, write-ups of "average" AT-AT pilots, snow-speeder pilots, cold-assault troopers, and so on.

The book also contains sixteen pages of full-color glossy poster prints, which were a nice addition. One of the prints is of the rare *Revenge of the Jedi* posters, before the name change. In the back of the book are also a few Ralph McQuarrie sketches.

My recommendation? If you already have the *Galaxy Guide* books mentioned above, you may find you don't need this one. If you want a new book which neatly compiles all of the characters you'll ever need from the movies, then this book is for you. Although a bit on the expensive side, it does supply a wealth of information. Thumbs up. ❑



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Putting Time Travel into Your Campaign

By Jolly R. Blackburn

JUST A MATTER OF TIME

Part One
The History of Time Travel

"With knowledge, comes power. And with that power comes responsibility. Do we actually believe man is responsible enough to hold the keys to time? Dare we trust ourselves? I think not. Just as man turned the powers of the atom into an instrument of war, so would he turn time into a weapon."

Admiral Jason Stanworth
Before the World
Conference of 2102

◆ ◆ ◆

Stanton shouldered his high-powered rifle and pressed his right eye against the sensor-scope. He quickly scanned the crowd in the market platz below him and hoped he was not too late. His breathing came heavy and he felt his arms begin to tremble. He would have time to get off one good shot and then all hell would break loose.

He was just about to lower his weapon and rest his eye when the sensor locked on to an out-of-sync target and began to hum an alarm. Stanton found the trigger with his finger and readied himself as he gazed at the target. A large man in native garb had just emerged from the pub and was making his way into the crowd.

There was nothing about his appearance that would betray his true identity to the casual passer-by. The scanner, however, could see through such disguises. It could readily identify a person who was out-of-sync for what he was – a refugee from the future, hiding in the past.

Stanton had been a Retriever for six years and he thrived on it. Since it was the only legal means of time travel, he felt he was privileged. As a licensed Retriever he was allowed to chase criminals into the past and return them to justice. For his trouble, he collected a bounty and an occasional book or movie deal.

Stanton squeezed the trigger and his target exploded in a shower of blood and bone. He smiled and hit the recall unit on his belt. He sighed in relief when the telltale acknowledgment signal came back. As he turned to energy and the image before him began to fade, he made a mental calculation of his profits for this mission. It had been a good day.

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Introduction

Just A Matter of Time is a generic campaign backdrop that allows the GM to introduce time travel to his science-fiction campaign. The advantage of a generic approach is that the article has a wider appeal and is readily useable to more GMs. The drawback? The GM must assume a portion of the responsibility and tailor the setting for the game he is running. Of course, most GMs relish the idea of tampering with the rules, so this presents no real problem.

Many game-designers have avoided the introduction of time travel into their systems because they feel the rules can wreak havoc upon a campaign. It is largely believed that time travel lends a feel of "fantasy" to an otherwise reality-based milieu that is solidly grounded in science.

With this system, I have assumed that time travel is a real science with physical laws governing how it works. The result is a time travel system with built-in limitations. These limitations will keep time travel from trashing your campaign.

The presence of a scientific rationale for time travel, and laws governing it, will help prevent even the most true-to-life campaign from being diminished.

This article is being presented in two parts. Part One deals with the history of time travel, its discovery, and how man dealt with this new power. The second installment, which will appear in our next issue, will provide some NPCs and a short adventure.

Discovery

Man has dreamed of breaking the barriers of time for thousands of years. Much in the same way he dreamed of reaching out to the stars, man has searched for a way to travel back into the past or forward into the future. As man garnered more and more knowledge, the evidence seemed to rule out the feasibility of time travel. It would take several centuries for man to realize that his own narrow

view of the universe had led him to the wrong conclusion

Early in the 23rd Century the dream became reality. In July of 2272, Dr. Larry Oliver, a physicist at the Mt. Palomar Institute of Physics, accidentally discovered a new form of energy. Dr. Oliver made his discovery during his investigation of a peculiar problem affecting the new multi-billion dollar communications platform, Argo-Net, which had been placed in orbit above the earth.

A strange image distortion in relayed data from Argo-Net was rendering the facility useless. In the midst of budget-cuts and public outcry, Argo-Net had been hailed by its designers as being the link to a new age. The platform used a revolutionary process to send and retrieve messages to and from the far flung star colonies of earth, twenty times faster than conventional means

Early calibration tests, however, caused some faces to turn red. Argo-Net didn't perform as promised. The problem centered around strange ripples or distortions that appeared in the gathered communications data. Despite weeks of brain-storming, the problem could not be eliminated. Argo-Net was shut down and the designers went back to the drawing board.

Dr. Oliver was chosen to head up a panel of leading scientists to find the origin of the "ripples" and to devise a fix. After an exhaustive eight-month study, he called a press conference and announced to the world the panel's amazing conclusions.

The ripples, it was discovered, were caused by a previously unknown form of energy generated by the passage of time. Dr. Oliver christened the new discovery "Antion Waves" or simply "AWs" (named for Charles Antion, a renowned scientist who had suggested the existence of such waves and was widely ridiculed twenty years earlier).

In a follow-up report to the scientific community entitled *Antion Waves: The Rubicon Paradox*, Dr. Oliver suggested that it was theoretically possible to isolate and tap AWs. Once that had been achieved, he maintained, it would be possible to travel back into time to the time period associated with the isolated wave. Dr. Oliver warned that isolating Antion Waves would be akin to Caesar crossing the Rubicon – the world would forever change and there would be no turning back. The warning went unheeded as the scientific community embraced the new field of study with zeal.

Dr. Oliver correctly surmised that AWs were unstable and unpredictable, which would make it extremely difficult to isolate specific dates or periods of time. Although the Mt. Palomar Institute had managed to prove the existence of Antion Waves, they were unsuccessful in their attempts to isolate them for further study.

They had discovered the highways that would allow men to travel to the past. It would be up to others to devise the vehicle that would take them there. The field would remain largely one of theory and conjecture for the next decade.

As time passed, the scientific community made very little progress in isolating Antion Waves. No one doubted that it could be done, but it soon became obvious that it would be years before the feat would be possible and perhaps even longer before it was learned how to tap into them. Once again, for lack of technical know-how, the dream of time travel

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would remain a dream for a while longer. Research continued independently around the world, despite the challenges.

Harsh Reality

Finally, in the year 2296, a research team which had been funded by a coalition of industrialists in Schwaebisch Gumeund, Germany, built a working isolation chamber to isolate the first Antion Wave. The chamber used enormous amounts of energy and required the aid of powerful super-computers designed especially for the task.

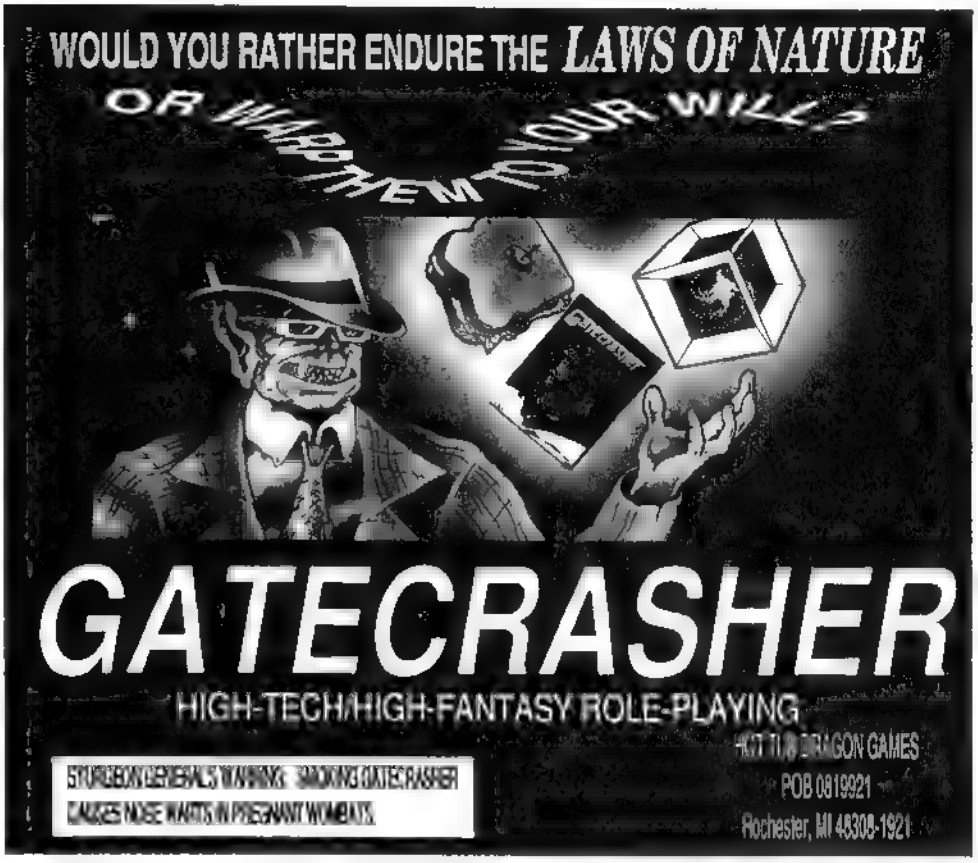
Using the chamber, Antion Waves were monitored by the computers and then isolated until waves representing small increments of time (from two to twenty days) were identified. The isolated AWs were then tapped, and small robotic surveillance units (RSUs) were sent into the past. After retrieval of the RSUs, the team analyzed the resulting data and determined what time-period had been breached.

The recorded footage brought back by RSUs captivated the minds of the public. One of the first RSUs recorded the happenings on a busy street in London in the year 1456.

After numerous experiments, the team was able to calibrate the computers to isolate specific time periods upon command. The team had constructed the world's first operational time-machine. For the next few years, the small town in the Schwaebian mountains of southern Germany would be the center of man's universe.

Although they had successfully sent electronic monitoring equipment into the past and retrieved it, the consensus was that a living creature could not survive the ordeal with current technology. The team also made another, more important discovery: time travel into the future appeared to be impossible – since the Antion Waves that would be associated with any future dates had not yet been generated.

Another problem with AWs that the German team encountered was the fact that once a time-period had been tapped, the surrounding waves were violently disrupted. In short, this caused a one-shot effect; meaning that a specific time period could be visited or tapped only once. All additional attempts to isolate waves for the same time frame would fail. It was unclear if the disruption was permanent or would dissipate with time.



The German team also learned that once the object had entered the AW, a sustained, equal level of energy was needed to hold it there. If the energy-matrix was disrupted, the object automatically popped back to its time period of origin.

Because of the fluctuations in AW intensities there was only a limited "window" of time in which time travel was possible. Any further attempts to send an object to the same window of time would prove extremely difficult, if not impossible.

After numerous RSU missions, the German team decided to send a living volunteer into the past.

Joseph Reinhardt, a thirty-two year old historian from Dardmstadt, Germany was selected for the honor. The team decided to send the world's first time traveller as close to the date of July 7, 957 A.D. as possible. It was a significant date because historians of the time period had recorded a supernova in the constellation of Orion. The event lighted up the night sky for three consecutive days.

The team hoped their volunteer would be able to record and witness the spectacular display first hand, offering irrefutable proof of the journey and pinpointing the exact time period of the mission.

The mission ended in failure, however. Reinhardt returned to the isolation chamber doubled over in pain. After heroic attempts were made to save his life, he died two days later.

Further study concluded the transitional phase of time travel was too traumatic on the nervous system. Research did not provide any solutions or any indications that one would be found.

Soon scientific institutions from around the world were sending their leading scholars to the German research facility to aid in the quest.

The field of Antion Wave study had begun to advance at a rapid rate and it became clear that it was only a matter of time before it would be possible to successfully send the first man into the past.

In the spring of 2302, however, something happened that would sour the dream. An RSU sent into the past by a Canadian-built isolation chamber created

an incident that had far-reaching implications. Details of just what took place are sketchy, since the facility attempted a cover-up. It is known that an RSU had been sent into 13th Century France and that a young woman, native to the time period, was killed when the RSU collided with her. Though it was very unlikely the woman's death could have altered the time-matrix, the lesson was clear – man could alter the outcome of events in the past.

When news of the event began to filter out to the news media, sounds of alarm were raised. A World Conference convened later that year in Sidney, Australia to discuss the issue of Antion Wave study and time travel. The concern was that time travellers or RSUs could be sent into the past to deliberately alter history. The World Conference heard from leading experts in the field and listened to all sides of the argument.

After much heated debate the Conference passed down its decision. It declared time travel a crime against mankind and outlawed it. It banned any further study and ordered that all isolation chambers be destroyed. The various factions in the scientific community protested, the chambers were systematically destroyed, and all available research was confiscated.

The means of time travel had finally come to light, but the world was not about to embrace it.

Time Travel Goes Underground

In 2307, a routine police raid was made on a white supremist group called "The Taskmasters" who had set up a para-military base in the deserts of southwestern Texas. The operation made a horrifying discovery. Besides finding a considerable stash of hi tech weapons and armaments, law enforcement officials discovered a peculiar array of computers and electronic equipment.

As agents poured over documentation found in the compound, the horror of what they had stumbled upon came to light.

The hate-group had been building an isolation chamber which was only a few months short of being fully operational.

The chamber used several advanced features that were hitherto unknown. Further investigation showed that the isolation chamber would have been capable of sending men back into time, as well as retrieving them – a first!

A panel of scientists were called in to inspect the facility before it was destroyed. The scientists were baffled How did a small, under-financed group of ruffians succeed where the most brilliant minds in science had failed?

Inspection of the group's accounting ledgers soon revealed the answer. The material and plans for the chamber had been purchased through a vast underground network which had links throughout the world.

The group had funneled nearly a billion dollars into the project. The only nagging question remaining was, "why?"

The investigators soon learned the terrible truth. The group had made plans to alter the outcome of the American Civil War!

The plan, as laid out in meticulous detail, might have seemed laughable, had it not been for the nearly operational time machine.

The plan called for three groups of terrorists, acting independently, to be sent different to time periods during the Civil War. By assassinating key leaders and providing military intelligence to the Confederacy, the group hoped to either prolong the war long enough to force the Union to sign a truce, or to help the Confederacy win an all-out victory. The insanity behind the plan was to stop the emancipation of slaves.

The implications were obvious. Not only had a covert-research developed the means to send men back in time, but it was quite probable that such journeys had already taken place. These were not curious historians wanting to rub elbows with the past, they were terrorists with access to the ultimate weapon – time!

As news of the underground time-machines spread, the nations of the world responded in shock. The thought of terrorists in the past disrupting, and possibly even changing history was too much to handle.

Another world conference was immediately called into session to deal with the situation. During the conference, news surfaced that another terrorist plot had been thwarted in Cairo, Egypt. This more insidious plot involved sending a nuclear warhead into the German Reichstag dur-

ing the height of World War II in hopes of killing Hitler and his henchmen.

If the delegates of the conference had any doubts as to the severity of the situation, they were now convinced.

The conference ended with the creation of a new law enforcement agency that was armed with far reaching powers and authority, both of which extended beyond international borders.

Due to its rushed formation, this new organization was simply referred to as "Bunker 12" or "B12," named after an abandoned bomb shelter in Zurich, Switzerland that had been chosen as the headquarters.

B12 soon became one of the largest intelligence-gathering organizations in the world. New research was begun within B12 to develop counter-measures in order to combat time-terrorism.

The first director of B12, the infamous Admiral Jason Stanworth of the United African States, set the new agency on a course of strict military discipline and conduct, and instilled the attitude in his men that they were in a state of war.

The most effective weapon developed by B12's new Research and Development Corp was the Antion-Wave Disrupter. The Disrupter used the famous "one-shot" effect of time travel to its advantage. By setting up large isolation chambers and sending RSUs back and forth to a broad band of AWs, they effectively sealed off key periods of history and prevented any time-altering missions in those dates.

Disrupting the waves was not foolproof, however. New advances in isolation chambers made it possible to tap even disrupted waves, but the risk to the traveller was considerable.

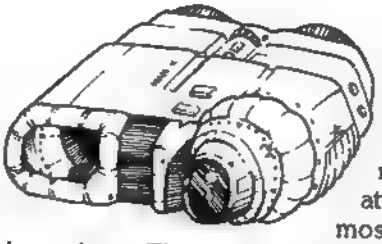
Ferrets and Skippers

Members of B12 became fond of using colorful language and slang to describe their mission.

Time-terrorists were quickly dubbed, "Ferrets" and a wide range of equipment and tactics were developed to track them down (hopefully, before they managed to jump into the past and do harm).

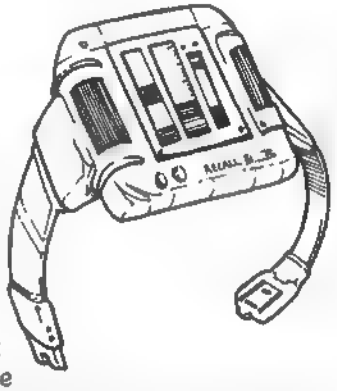
B12 assumed that at some point, Ferrets would make a successful jump. When that happened, B12 wanted to be able to respond. The battlefield for these contests

Tools of the Trade



Out-of-Phase Detector (OPD) (aka Ferret Detector)

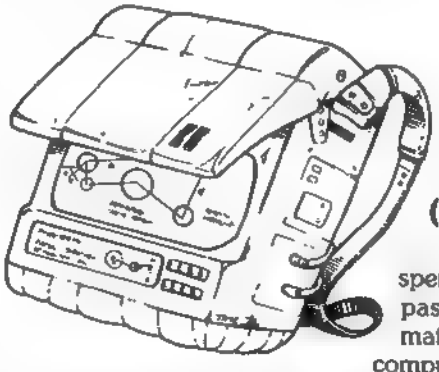
This device is available in several configurations. It can be fitted as a rifle scope, or attached to a helmet visor or camera lens. The most common form is the binocular version shown here. The OPD is battery-powered and is designed to read the energy patterns used to hold a time traveller in the past. This allows Retrievers to distinguish Ferrets from natives of the time period. In addition, the OPD is also equipped with night-vision capabilities.



Recall Patch (aka Popper)

This device was originally a small metallic disk that was sewn into the lining of an agent's clothing (thus a "patch"). Later the patch was enhanced with various safety features and options and is now worn on the wrist or hung from the belt.

When an agent hits the Recall Patch, the unit disperses the energy field which is holding the agent in the past. Once the field is dispersed, the agent pops back to his time period of origin. Some patches have a built in sensor that tells the wearer when he is being scanned by an OPD.



Portable Time Unit (aka Sidekicker)

The PTU permits a time traveller to spend an extended period of time in the past by amplifying and maintaining the matrix. The PTU also houses a personal computer and can be configured for various mission types. The MKIV PTU shown here includes a skip-module that allows the traveller to make limited jumps into other time periods by relaying the energy matrix and chaining.

would be unlike any other known to man, they would take place in the past.

Besides the large, well organized and financed terrorist organizations, B12 also had to contend with other nuisances and threats to the time-matrix.

With developments in AW technology, a new breed of time traveller has recently entered the picture. B12 refers to them as "Skippers." Skippers are individuals, who, for various reasons, want to jump to the past and stay there.

They have developed a way of "skipping" across Antion Waves by carrying a Portable Time Unit (PTU) which increases the amount of time they can hold an AW open and thus, remain in the past. By jumping across AWs instead of returning to the future, Skippers have been able to sustain a time mission to as long as six months.

The first Skippers, were simply well-meaning historians who were defying the ban on time travel in order to unlock the secrets of the past. It is just a matter of time before the ability to skip falls into the hands of terrorists, leading to time-chases across the pages of history.

Retrievers

B12's main line of defense became the Retrievers. These highly trained, colorful agents became modern day bounty hunters with a strange twist – the prey they sought dwelled in the past.

B12 pursued the highest qualified men and women available. The cream of the crop were skimmed from military academies and universities from around the world. Lucrative benefits were offered to potential recruits. For every Ferret killed or captured the Retriever received a handsome bonus. Early pensions were awarded, as well as royalties on any book or movie deals based on the agent's exploits.

Retrievers became the highest paid soldiers in the world. The idea, of course, was to attract the best and, having done so, retain them.

Beyond that, the lucrative perks were designed to make the ranks of B12 untouchable and beyond reproach. A desirable trait, since Retrievers were virtually on their own once they stepped into the past.

B12 Defense Network

Working with the top scientists available, B12 eventually developed a monitoring network that created an umbrella of defense around the world.

Since it required enormous amounts of energy to isolate and tap AWs, it was a relatively easy matter to detect such energy surges. Once detected, B12 was able to determine the windows of time that had been tapped. With varying degrees of accuracy, B12 was eventually able to determine the dates breached and how many travellers had jumped into the past.

Once a "tapping" was detected, a Retriever team could be activated and sent in to "fix" the situation.

Barely eighteen months after its creation, B12 infiltrated and shutdown a major Ferret ring operating in the remote areas of the Pacific Northwest.

The technology and equipment recovered at these sights confirmed what B12 detectors had been warning.

Underground researchers were developing effective counterparts to B12's defenses. The need for an agency like B12 would be a permanent one.

The Retriever Campaign

The backdrop given above should allow any GM to work the idea of time travel and Retrievers into his/her campaign. Depending on how far into the future your campaign takes place, B12 could have evolved and taken on new aspects. The GM will have to decide what extent such changes have taken.

The Retriever Campaign is based on the assumption that society was able to get a cap on time travel before irreparable damage was done. This cap is a precarious one, however, and society is always in fear that someone will manage to outwit B12.

The campaign will center around B12's struggle against several terrorist organizations. Each of these organizations will have their own agenda and reasons for wanting to alter-history.

The Retriever As Player Character

The most successful time travel campaigns are those centered around a group of players taking on the role of a Retriever team. Such teams are organized like

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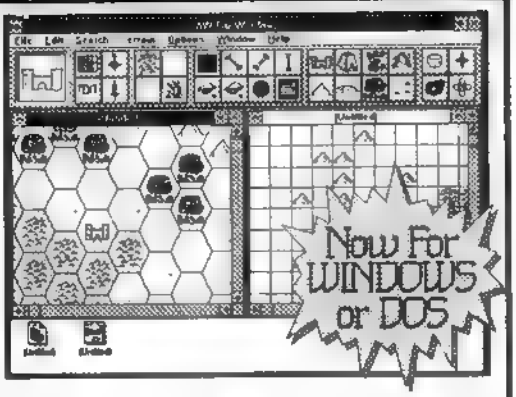

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small military units. This includes rank, a chain of command and, of course, the need to answer to a higher authority. Time travel missions represent orders being handed down to the team. Such orders may have specific goals for the team or they may be vague.

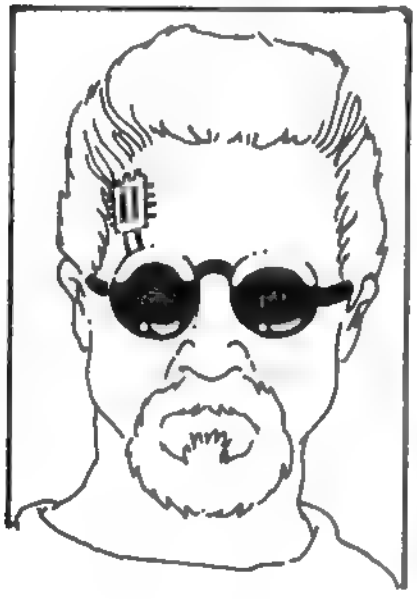
Missions

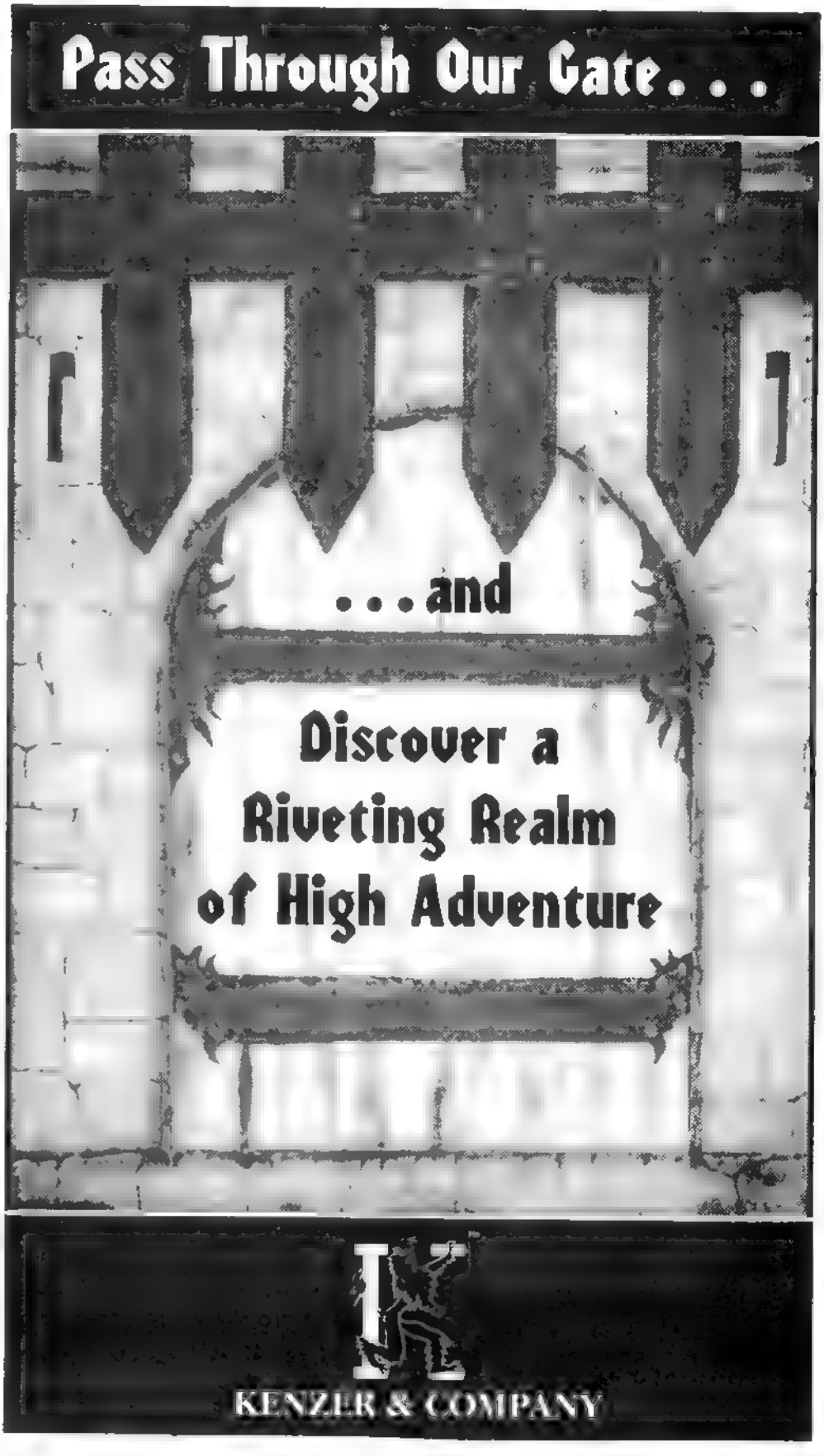
The most common type of mission will be a simple retrieval or elimination of the illegal time traveller(s) involved. B12 will detect a tap in the Antion Waves and the team will be called in to give chase. The team will jump in and, depending on the accuracy of the jump, enter the time period either a few days prior or a few days after the Ferrets.

Jumping in at the exact same moment as the Ferrets is extremely risky and rarely attempted because of the one-shot effect mentioned above.

If the Ferret(s) is taken out before causing any harm to the time period in question, the Retrievers return home and collect their bounties. If damage was done to the time matrix, the team is authorized to do "damage control" (i.e. attempt to correct the situation).

In Part Two of this article, we will cover the process of time travel in more detail and take a closer look at the B12 and Retrievers. Then, to help you get your own campaign going, we will introduce some interesting NPCs and wrap it up with a short sample adventure. ❑





ZINE SCENE

A Closer Look at the Small Press World

by Jolly R. Blackburn

Sometimes it is easy to forget that the gaming industry rose up from humble beginnings. Gone are the blue jeaned executives of many of those early companies, having been replaced by suit-and-tie types who see games merely as a product rather than a work of love.

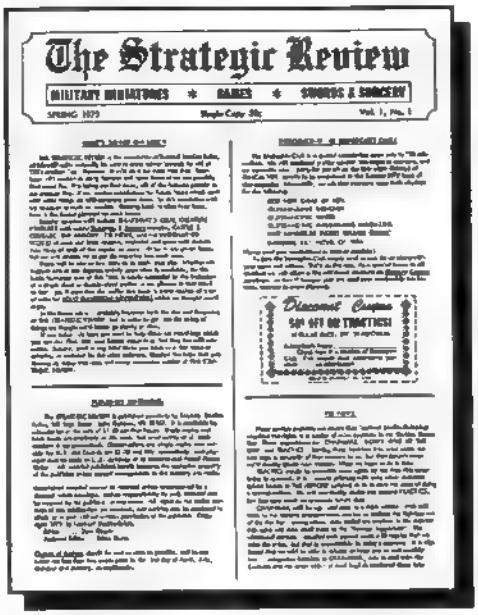
Easy to forget until you start to delve into the world of small press. It is here that you find there is a tremendous grass-roots network of newsletters, pamphlets and magazines, generated by nothing short of the editors' love of gaming.

Circulation of these gems may run anywhere from fifty to several thousand issues. They cover the entire gamut of the hobby. Some specialize on specific systems such as *BattleTech, Space 1889*, etc. Others cover certain genres such as superhero, horror or dark future.

While production quality varies (some zines are simply xeroxed and stapled in the corner – void of art), most zines have something to say that is worth listening to. They are the voice of the average gamer shouting to be heard.

Zine Scene will address this often overlooked facet of the industry. Each issue will highlight several zines that have crossed my desk.

Any small-press publishers out there, regardless of size or focus, are encouraged to send sample issues in care of SHADIS.


The Strategic Review

MILITARY MINIATURES * GAMES * SWORDS & SORCERY

The Strategic Review

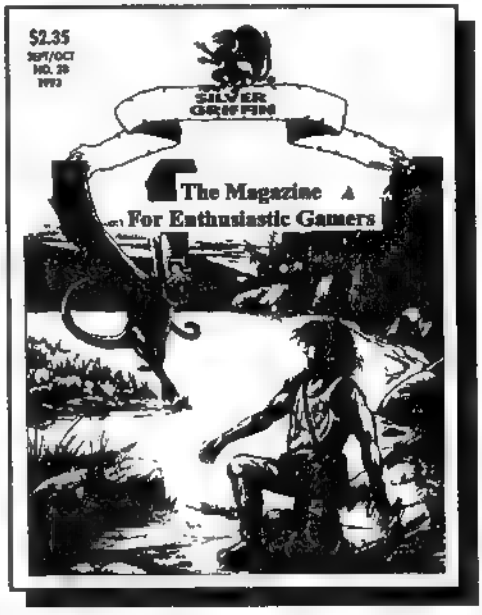
Publisher: Tactical Studies Rules
Editor: Gary Gygax
Assistant Editor: Brian Blume
Frequency: Quarterly
Sample Copy: 75¢

Don't bother trying to find a copy of ***The Strategic Review*** unless you are a hard-core collector and have some extra cash lying around. This much sought after newsletter has been defunct since April, 1976.

I thought it would be appropriate to launch this column with this newsletter because it holds the honor of being the grand-daddy of all role-playing zines.

Along with war-games, experimental rules and regional news, this humble little publication was the first to herald the coming of a new age. Gary Gygax (creator of *Dungeons and Dragons*) and Brian Blume comprised the creative staff of this short-lived title. Seven issues were published before it was put to rest. Don't shed any tears though – the decision to shut down ***The Strategic Review*** was made to pave the way for Gary's second publication. Yep, you guessed it – *Dragon® Magazine*.

So if anyone questions the validity of a small-press column – let this dead, but not forgotten newsletter serve as our example; proof that great things can and do come from those lonely editors who pound the keys in attics and basements across the country.



Silver Griffin

Publisher: DreamMakers
Editor: Devlin Janax
Frequency: Quarterly
Sample Copy: $2.35

Silver Griffin is a survivor! Any small press zine that manages to put out nearly thirty issues is doing something right.

SG offers fiction, reviews, magic items, guest editorials, and NPCs for a variety of game systems. Devlin Janax manages to corner popular free-lancers from time to time such as Spike Y. Jones and Larry Elrich.

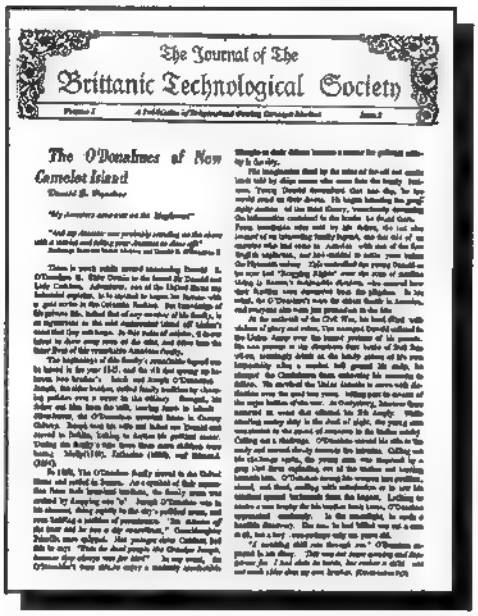
Also impressive is the fact that many issues of ***Silver Griffin*** sport slick, multi-color covers and while each issue may feature a particular company's game, ***Silver Griffin*** manages to report information without bias.

Issues generally run in the twenty-four page range and there is a generous offering of artwork from some very good artists such as David L. Transue, Jesse Mohn, and Jeff Menges.

Silver Griffin demonstrates what a small press zine can become once it attracts a loyal following. There is an atmosphere of comradery and tightness that the larger zines can never achieve.

Reviews tend to be honest and editorials reflect the views of the average gamer.

You can get a copy of ***Silver Griffin*** by sending a check to Silver Griffin, PO Box 1751, St. Paul MN 55101.


The Journal of The
Brittanic Technological Society

The O'Donahues of New Camelot Island

Brittanic Technological Society

Publisher: Dragonshead Gaming
Editor: Donald E. Brynelsen
Frequency: Quarterly
Sub Rate: $12.00

The Journal of The Brittanic Technological Society is an example of a newsletter devoted to a particular system. Fans of GDW's *Space 1889* RPG will definitely want to check out this one.

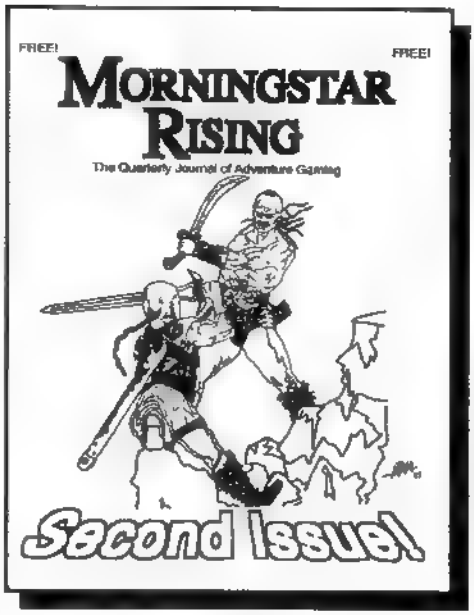
Donald does a wonderful job of giving the zine a victorian feel, complete with clipart from the 1800s. One gets the feeling he or she is reading an organizational newsletter from the time period.

In issue two there were articles on horseless carriages, newspaper clippings from 1890, a short adventure, and much more.

One thing I particularly like about ***BTS*** is its *Something for the Ladies* column which caters to female players and characters of *Space 1889*

It's also nice to see that GDW has apparently given its blessing to the publication. (Something that is becoming more and more uncommon in the industry these days with so many game companies aggressively shutting down fanzines.) Hats off to GDW!

If you want to get your hands on a copy, write to Dragonshead Gaming Concepts, 21W127 Tee Lane, #3, Itasca IL 60143.



Morning Star Rising

Editor: Mitchell Michaelson
Frequency: Quarterly
Sub Rate: Free

Morningstar Rising is a non-profit publication with a wide focus. In it you will find articles for *Star Fleet Battles*, *GURPS*, *Rolemaster*, *Warhammer* and much, much more.

Generally, there is something of interest to every gamer in an issue. And it's free – so who can complain?

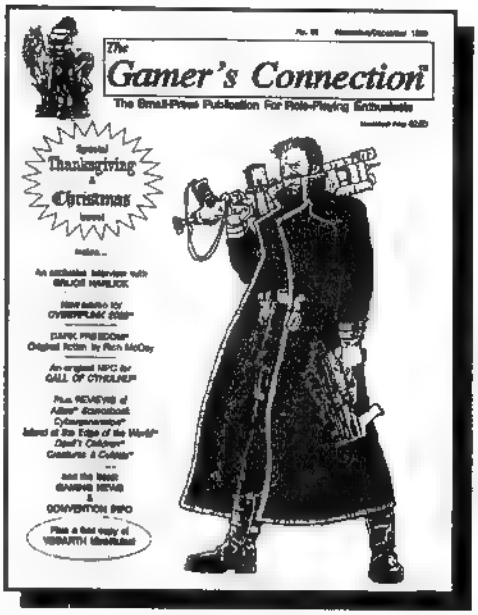
A recent issue included rule variants for *Ogre*, robots for *Warhammer 40K* and a Rebel Alliance Scout Ship for *Star Wars: The RPG*.

Also included is an on-running series on a fantasy campaign world called *Pangea* for the Hero System.

Mitchell lists himself as the "editor, publisher, art director and the fool who pays for this out of his own pocket." Most self-publishers can empathize with Mitchell's sentiments. Being a small press editor means wearing many hats. It also means you have to have a real love for your hobby, 'cause chances are, it's not going to make you rich.

Morningstar runs about fifty pages and is packed with well-written articles and rule variants.

You can get a copy by writing to Morningstar, PO Box 642026, Omaha NE 68164. (***MS*** is free, but you might consider sending an SASE to help Mitchell cover expenses.)



The Gamer's Connection

Publisher: MTA Graphics
Editor: Mark Arsenault
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Sub Rate: $15.00

The Gamer's Connection has a good reputation for being independent and impartial – something it shares with SHADIS. (Which is why we asked Mark to head up our *Bits n' Pieces* column.)

Mark takes advantage of the easy access that many online services give to game company representatives in order to get inside information and news-worthy items. This keeps ***TGC*** current and on the cutting edge – very impressive for a small press zine.

TGC generally runs NPCs for popular systems, interviews, product reviews, convention information and rule variants.

Mark has a unique payment policy for contributors. By submitting material, authors earn points which can earn them game products donated by sponsoring game companies

For a sample copy send $2.00 to MTA Graphics, PO Box 278331, Sacramento CA 95827-8331.

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BITS N' PIECES

Rumors, New Products, Etc.

by Mark Arsenault

Greetings and welcome to 1994 and this, the first "new and improved" *Bits n' Pieces*! It is new because I have taken over as the writer of this wonderful gaming news forum. Whether or not it is truly improved will be for you, the readers, to decide. However, suffice it to say that I will endeavor to bring you news from the industry we have come to know and love! So without further adieu, I bring you...

Legal Briefs

Nightshift Games, a division of Crunchy Frog Ent., announced that they had changed the name of their new release *Elfpunk* to *FaeriePunk*. It seems that Steve Jackson Games had previously claimed the name.

"It came as a surprise to me," stated Paul Lidberg, President of Crunchy Frog. "They (SJG) have the documentation and it's not worth a fight."

A Novel Idea

White Wolf Games has acquired the rights to publish the *Borderlands* anthologies. According to Travis Williams, each book will sport an original painting by Dave McKean for the cover. By the end of 1995, said Williams, White Wolf will have more than ten fiction books out.

Con Report

The next major convention is scheduled for July. *Origins '94* will be held in San Jose, July 7-10. The convention coordinator is none other than Michael Pondsmith, who is also working on projects for R. Talsorian Games. I plan to be in attendance, as do a number of industry companies, including folks from Hero Games and others. Watch for more information about this final west coast appearance of *Origins*.

Staff Matters

First the obvious. SHADIS magazine has added several new members to its crew. Yours truly has taken over this very column, and Matt Pearson will be in charge of the new live role-playing column. Matt plans to bring you the latest in LARP news and events and welcomes any letters and comments from our readers

If you have a LARP event you want announced, or just want to say "hi," drop Matt a line either via snail mail or over the Internet. Matt can be reached at WARIORSOUL@AOL.COM, and my address is TGCEDITOR@AOL.COM.

West End Games has three new faces in its art department: Brian Schomburg (known by some for his Infiniverse/Torg cartoons); Nicholle Black in graphics; and Tom O'Neill, who is currently working in the *Star Wars* line.

Crunchy Frog Ent. has named Guy McLimore as the new Line Editor for their Star Corps line. Guy will also be involved in the Corps Worlds project, according to Paul Lidberg.

Steve Martin (no, not the "wild and crazy guy") has taken over as the new America Online representative for Wizards of the Coast. Any members of AOL can send mail to him at "WotC." Steve replaces Wizards of the Coast President, Peter Adkison, on AOL. Peter will remain company president, we hear....

Going Batty

Pagan Publishing acquired a new animal kingdom representative. Edgar, a small brown bat, had taken up residence in the Pagan Publishing office. Edgar joins Spooge the Cat as a furry rep for the publishers of "The Unspeakable Oath."

"We found him in the hallway," said Pagan rep John Tynes, "appropriately enough, right next to the candelabra and gothic wall mirror that decorate the entrance. Or maybe it's one of the White Wolf guys on vacation? Anyone seen Travis around? I have been feeling a bit drained lately...."

New 'Zines

There will soon be a new support newsletter for fans of the Renegade Legion game. *Renegade Transmissions*, a new quarterly 'zine published by Nightshift Games, will feature variant tanks and ships for the various Renegade Legion games and startling tidbits about the future of the Renegade Legion universe.

Watch for the first issue in January, 1994. For more information, contact Nightshift Games at 889 Mowry Avenue #105, Fremont CA 94536.

There is reportedly a magazine for *Star Wars* fans called *Report from the Star Wars Generation* from High Drive Publications. The publication does not deal with the role-playing game, but will still be of interest to *Star Wars* fans in general. Write to High Drive Publications, PO Box 23, 2300 Market Street, San Francisco CA 94114.

Departing 'Zines

Vision Magazine is reportedly dead, after a paltry three issue run. The publishers have not made any public comment about the failing of the magazine.

This writer is still awaiting word on the fate of his subscription check which was sent in some time ago. A word of caution

to anyone else who had seen this once-promising mag – do not subscribe!

Cutting Corners

Several people have asked how to distinguish between the first and second printing cards from their *Magic: The Gathering* game. According to WotC, it is the corners. The newer cards have a smaller radius corner and the face colors are brighter. There are some decks that have both first and second printing cards.

Licenses

Steve Jackson Games has reached an agreement with Chaosium, Inc. to use the *Cthulhu Mythos* in a cyberpunk/Cthulhu crossover to be called *GURPS CthulhuPunk*. The project is being written by Chris McCubbin, and is tentatively scheduled for a Fall '94 release.

Other licensed SJG products include the recent *GURPS Vampire* and the upcoming *GURPS Werewolf: The Masquerade*. SJG has also awarded a license to Wizards of the Coast to publish *GURPS Tallslanta*.

R. Talsorian is turning Japanese – and Spanish and German! R. Talsorian announced the release of several translations of their popular products into the overseas market.

Cyberpunk is being released in Japanese from Yellow Submarine. A Spanish version of *Cyberpunk* will be published by M+D Editores of Madrid. A German edition of *DreamPark* from Welt Der Spiele is also in the works.

Rumor Control

Speaking of translations, discussions are underway between R. Talsorian and Stratelibri (publishers of the Italian *Cyberpunk*) for an Italian version of *Teenagers From Outer Space* and *Mekton*.

Hero Games announced that they are revising their *Fantasy Hero* book yet again. There will be changes in representation and writing style and an expansion of magic and magic systems, weapons maneuvers, and so on. *Fantasy Hero 3rd Edition* is tentatively planned for release in late 1994.

The West End Games staff is working on the *Miniatures Battle Companion* and vehicle miniatures rules. *Galaxy Guide 4: Aliens* has cleared the desk of editor Ed Stark, and there is talk of reprinting WEG's starship combat game, *Star Warriors*.

The *Shatterzone Ships* book, being written by Shane Hensley (*Sole Survivor*), is near completion. Other *Shatterzone* products on the horizon include an aliens book and *The Fringer's Guide (Everything You Need To Be An Unproductive Member of Society)*.

For Paranoia fans, WEG is working on *Paranormal/CTV*, the first Paranoia flip book. Roughly half of the book will be a horror and supernatural parody, with *The Not-so-great and Mediocre Old Ones*. The other half looks at Alpha Complex vids, including classics such as *Clone Family Feud, 100,000 Plasticred Pyramid*, and *Twin PEX Sector*.

Look for several books for *Vampire: The Masquerade* this year. White Wolf has Vampire releases planned for February, June and September. Also due out this year is *Wraith*, the next in the *Storyteller* series, and several *Werewolf* tribe books. Each tribe book will have a comic in the back. The first tribebook comic is done by Tony Harris. According to WW rep, Travis Williams, White Wolf will be publishing heavy this year.

"Some things we cannot talk about are in the works that could prove to make White Wolf quite a bit of cash," said Williams. "I will say that we have the mass market."

Kult players could see a *Kult* poster/game supplement from Metropolis Ltd.

The 30"x20" poster would feature the Kult Seraphim on one side and new Archetypes, advantages/disadvantages, dark secrets and other game stuff on the other. Also in the idea stage are a *Kult* player's guide and GM screen.

Hero Games is revamping their *Champions Universe*. Continuity Editor, Sean Fannon, has indicated that Hero is going for a whole new look and feel for future *Champions Universe* releases. Expect a new look, new product categories, new marketing – the works.

"A lot of characters and groups are dead and gone," Sean says, "and others are destined for re-writes."

Hollywood Connection

Since the tragic death of actor River Phoenix, rumors from Hollywood seem to point toward Christian Slater as a likely replacement for the part of the interviewer in the silver screen adaptation of *Interview with the Vampire*. Tom Cruise has been reportedly cast in the part of Louis, and the Vampire Lestat is reportedly to be played by Brad Pitt. No word of a release date.

While we're on the subject of monster movies, John Cleese (of Monty Python fame) has reportedly been cast in the latest movie adaptation of *Frankenstein*.

Cleese will play Dr. Frankenstein's teacher in the film. I'm told there are no dead parrots in the film, however. *Star Wars* fans will be happy to hear the following. A little bird tells me that Lucas will film the next three *Star Wars* films back to back and will release the films one at a time, with the first of the new trilogy to be released on Memorial Day, 1997. Filming was rumored to have begun recently. The release of the next film would coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the *Star Wars* premiere, hinting at quite an advertising campaign! The next three movies are rumored to be episodes one through three of the *Star Wars* story, which take place prior to the original 1977 movie. No word on movie adaptations of the Zahn novels, which take place after *Return of the Jedi*.

No word on when we can expect to see the *Fantastic Four* movie. It was scheduled for release last Labor Day. Let's hope that all these delays mean a higher quality film.

The December 2 issue of *Drama-Logue* reports that New Line Cinema and Virtual World Entertainment's first collaboration will be the movie *BattleTech*, which will be based on VWE's video game. "The deal was announced by New World's CEO Michael De Luca, VWE's Tim Disney, Jordan Wiesman and Charles Fink, who will serve as executive producers."

ASCII Text

Gamers with access to the Internet can now receive information and announcements from Chaosium Inc. To be added to Chaosium Inc.'s Internet mailing list, simply send e-mail to MAJORDOMO@ERZO.BERKELEY.EDU with the statement "subscribe chaos-info" in the body of the letter (to unsubscribe, e-mail the same address with the message "unsubscribe chaos-info"). *Chaosium Digest* contains articles, adventures and other

items of interest to players of Chaosium Inc. games.

Wizards of the Coast is joining the ranks of game companies that can now be reached on the Internet. Questions or comments can be sent to Wizards of the Coast at QUESTIONS@WIZARDS.COM

Steve Jackson Games has recently updated their BBS to allow Internet access. *Illuminati Online* can be reached at IO.COM. *Shadow of the Comet* is a Cthulhu-esque computer game by Infograms, a French computer game company. Look for it in regular software stores.

Hero System fans with an IBM compatible PC can now create characters using *HeroMaker*, the new character creation program from Hero Software. A Macintosh version is in the works. For more info contact Hero Software, PO Box 699, Aptos CA 95001-0699.

Writers Wanted

West End Games is still accepting submissions for their *Shatterzone Quarterly Newsletter* and the *Star Wars Adventure Journal*. They are looking for new aliens, optional rules, equipment, planets and other interesting material.

"Contributors will receive credit," says WEG staffer, Ed Stark, "and if we really like your stuff, we may commission you to expand upon your work." Sounds like a good deal to me. You can contact West End Games at RR 3 Box 2345, Honesdale PA 18431.

If writing horror supplements is more your speed, you'll be happy to know that Chaosium Inc. is looking for authors to write two new books for their *Call of Cthulhu* line. One book is a discussion of sanitariums and psychiatric treatment from the 1870s to today. The other is a book about gangs and criminals in the 1920s and early 1930s. The length of each project is 35,000 to 40,000 words. If you're interested, contact Lynn Willis at Chaosium Inc., 950-A 56th Street, Oakland CA 94608.

What's Ahead

The following products are slated for release in January and February. This list is not exhaustive, but represents those products I was aware of at the time of printing.

January '94

Chaosium
King of Chicago (CoC; $Unk)
Cthulhu's Heirs (fiction;$9.95)
Fate of Fools ($Unk)

Nightshift Games
Renegade Transmissions #1 (Publ; $2)

FASA Corporation
Medium OmniMech Tech Prints (BT; $15)
Germany Sourcebook (SR; $18)
Earthdawn Companion ($18)
Lone Wolf ($4.99)

Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.
MERP 2nd Ed. softbound ($20)
Minas Tirith Citadels of Middle-earth ($25)

Pagan Publishing
Walker in the Wastes (CoC; $20)
The Resurrected Vol. 2 ($5.95)
The Golden Dawn ($Unk)

Palladium Books
Rifts World Book Five: Triax & The NGR ($19.95)

R. Talsorian Games
Listen Up You Primitive Screwheads: The Unexpurgated Cyberpunk Ref's Guide ($10)

SJG
GURPS Lensman ($16.95)

February '94

Crunchy Frog Ent.
Critter-Trek ($12.95)

FASA Corporation
CityTech 2nd Ed. (BT; $Unk)
Sprawl Maps (SR; $15)
Fields of Fire (SR; $Unk)
Terror in the Skies (ED; $Unk)

Mayfair Games
Underground Player's Handbook ($Unk)
Australia Rails ($Unk)

West End Games
Star Wars Adventure Journal #1 ($Unk)

FINIEOUS FINGERS IS BACK!

AND HE HAS AN ATTITUDE!

Finieous Fingers Lives!

SHADIS has received permission from J.D. Webster to bring back the legendary comic strip, *Finieous Fingers*.

J.D. is too busy these days to do the strip himself, but has given us the go-ahead to contract another artist to fill his shoes. As of this writing, Jason Holmgren has been slated for the job.

For those younger gamers out there, *Finieous* was a cult-classic comic that ran in *Dragon® Magazine* between October 1976 and March 1980. Although extremely popular with readers, (TSR even printed a *Finieous Fingers Treasury* in 1981), the strip was put to rest because J.D. Webster's military career made too much demand on his time.

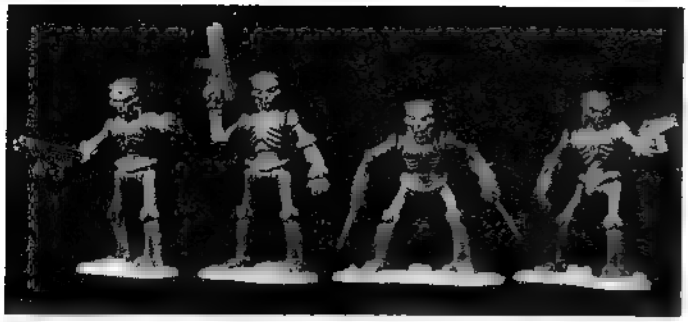
So be here next issue, when Finieous, Fred, Charlie and the rest of the gang make their comeback.

In Memorium

As a final note, I would like to take a moment to recognize the works and lives of three actors: River Phoenix, Bill Bixby and Vincent Price. All have left us in recent months; one tragically, and the other two from illness and age.

While none contributed directly to the gaming industry, I think it is safe to say that the films that each actor has appeared in have inspired many gamers and gamemasters. River Phoenix (*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*), Bill Bixby (*The Incredible Hulk*) and Vincent Price (original b&w version of *The Fly*) have each made contributions to the entertainment industry, and to the imaginations of this columnist.

It is to these three actors that I dedicate this issue's *Bits n' Pieces*. ❑



The incredible world of Rifts® as 3-dimensional metal miniatures

Rifts remains one of the absolute hottest role-playing games on the market! With mind-boggling characters, art and designs like those found in **Rifts Triax** and **Wormwood — Dimension Book One** this is one RPG that continues to surprise and delight its fans

Now Palladium adds a new dimension to the world of **Rifts** Three dimensional, collectable pewter figures (25 mm scale)!

These figures are produced by some of the finest sculptors at Palladium's disposal and includes the impressive talents of Jeff Wilhelm, James Johnson, Stephen Trickett, William Adams, Jason Weibe, Timothy Prow and Kevin White All our sculptors work under the direct guidance of Kevin Siembieda and the Palladium staff

Rifts miniature combat rules?!

Since the release of these popular pewter figures, Palladium has been swamped with demands for a set of miniature combat rules. We aren't making any promises, but we're seriously considering the idea — so keep your eyes peeled.

Meanwhile, the incredible SAMAS, Sky Cycle, Juicers, Skelebots, Glitter Boy, Atlantis figures and others are available to decorate your shelf and enhance your games right now! Check 'em out!!

Rifts® Miniature Check List

___ 8001 Glitter Boy #1 (our best selling figure): $7.95
___ 8002 Xiticix Pack (3 figures): $6 95
___ 8003 Coalition Soldiers #1 (4 figures; super hot!): $6 95
___ 8004 Coalition Dog Pack #1 (4 figures; hot!): $6 95
___ 8005 Men of Magic (4 Rifts figures): $6 95
___ 8006 Cyborgs #1 (4 figures, hot!): $7 95
___ 8007 Simvan & Ostrasaurus (a beauty & a steal!): $6 95
___ 8008 Coalition Skelebots #1 (4 figures; hot!): $7.95
___ 8009 Coalition SAMAS (2 large, beautiful figures; hot!) $8.95
___ 8010 Coalition Sky Cycle (an incredible piece!! Hot!) $9 95
___ 8011 Coalition Dog Pack #2 (4 different figures): $6 95
___ 8012 Juicers & a Crazy (4 dynamic figures): $7.95
___ 8013 Cyborgs #2 (4 new, great figures!): $8 95
___ 8014 Atlantis Set #1 (Overlord & 3 others; incredible): $8 95
___ 8015 Damaged Skelebots #1 (3 figures, one dead on base): $7.95

Recent releases

___ 8016 Cyber-adventurers #1 (cyber-knights & a new juicer): $7 95
___ 8017 Rogues & Scout #1 (4 figures, nice). $7 95
___ 8018 Brodkil & Witchling (2 giant figures, one small): $8.95
___ 8019 Damaged Skelebots #2 (4 battle damaged bots): $7.95
___ 8020 Psi-stalkers & Scouts #1 (4 figures, nice). $7 95

Palladium Books®
Dept. D

12455 Universal Drive
Taylor, Mi. 48180

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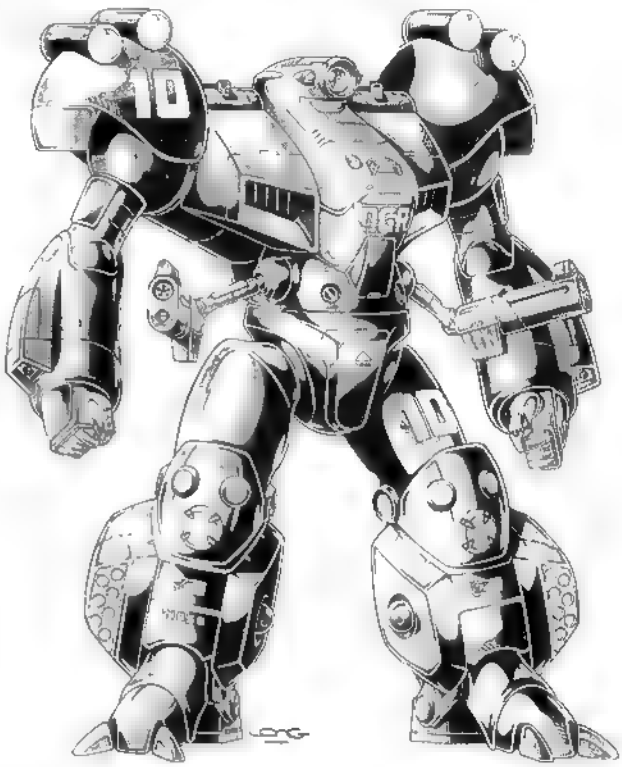
Coming Soon

Triax Predator
Triax Terrain Hopper & Explorer
Triax Power Armor & Bots
NGR Soldiers
Gargoyles & Gargoyles
Atlantis Set #2: Overlord & Conservator
Rifts Vampires Set #1
Wormwood Figures (monsters & heroes)
Chiang-ku Dragon
And more!

Boxed Set: UAR-1 Giant Assault Bot with 4 new CS soldiers and skelebots in action poses! Not yet scheduled
Boxed Set: Splugorth Slaver and barge with warrior women Not yet scheduled



Rifts® World Book Five: Triax™ & The NGR

Triax & the NGR is one of the most visually dynamic books ever produced by Palladium! Scores of NEW designs for robots, cyborgs, power armor, weapons and vehicles

The high-tech wonders of Triax are laid at your fingertips. Incredible bots and power armor that surpass anything the Coalition States have to offer The world of the New German Republic is described with all of its splendor and horrors. And there are horrors. The Germany of Rifts Earth is a battlefield under siege by supernatural monsters and alien invaders The villainous Gargoyle Empire, brodkil and gene-splicers are only a few of the demonic forces who challenge their very existence

Highlights Include:

- **Over 40 new designs for robots, power armor, cyborgs and vehicles, plus weapons, accessories, and equipment!**
- **Cyborgs and cybernetic implants.**
- **Over a dozen new Occupational Character Classes.**
- **The armies of the New German Republic (NGR).**
- **Gargoyles, their weapons, equipment and power armor!**
- **The Gargoyle Empire, Brodkil, Gene-splicers, an evil Millennium Tree and other exciting villains.**
- **Germany Mapped and key places described.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda with concepts by Kevin Long.**
- **Artwork by Kevin Long, Newton Ewell and Kevin Siembieda, plus 11 pages of comic strip by Long & Siembieda!**
- **$19.95 plus $2.00 for postage and handling.**
- **190+ pages — Available now at stores everywhere!**

Rifts® miniatures! Available at hobby shops and comic stores everywhere!

NEW PERSPECTIVES

The World of Miniatures

By Ken Carpenter
Photos by Don Witmer

Well, we just finished another blindingly swift holiday season! We've already made our New Year's resolutions ... and broken them. What's left to do? Work on our miniatures army!

Some of the most often heard complaints about miniatures games are: "He/She beat me with a gimmick army," "My army list isn't as good as his/hers," "He/She cheated," and "Can you believe the price of a bucket of popcorn?" (Oops – that last one was the most often heard complaint at a movie theater.)

Let's deal with these complaints one at a time. Let's start with "He/She cheated." This is always your own fault ... wait, hear me out! If you're saying this, one of two things happened – either you knew you were being cheated and didn't stop it (your fault) or someone told you, after the fact, that you were being cheated (also your fault). How is this your fault, you ask? If you don't know the rules well enough to keep the enemy from cheating (and the other player is always *the enemy* – at least until the game is over), then you haven't taken the time to get to know the rules *and* you didn't look it up when he started doing something strange – *your fault*.

"My army list isn't as good...." Now here's a problem. If this statement is true, then you need to find another game or another army. If it's just an excuse, then stop using it. Most game systems try to make army lists comparable, so each general has an even shot. This isn't always the case, however. In some games, certain armies are supposed to be at a disadvantage.

Look at the original *Warhammer 40K* for a minute. If you are familiar with the game, you know as well as I do that the Imperial Guard didn't win very often. Why? Because it was a sucky army list! (Sorry Guard fans, but it really was.) It was *supposed* to be a sucky army list. The Imperium has front line, good troops (Space Marines) and pukey, garrison troops (Imperial Guard). Someone who chooses Imperial Guard is looking for a challenge.

Now for my favorite, "I was beaten by a gimmick army." Believe it or not, this is your fault, too. Either you are playing a crummy game, which allows certain armies to create an unbeatable force, or more likely, you aren't familiar with the enemy lists and/or how to use your list to its fullest.

The real key to good generalship is knowing your army list – its strengths and weaknesses. Doing this will prepare you for any battle because you will always know your abilities and limitations. After you do this, get to know the enemy lists, so you can see exactly how they will try to exploit you

A few years ago, at a local gaming convention, one guy kept winning the *Warhammer 40K* tournament. A lot of the other players complained that his army just couldn't be beat, it was too gimmicked-up, and in a small way they were right. Finally, to prove that he could be beaten, the guy that ran the tournament challenged him and beat him – pretty soundly I understand. The key was a balanced army.

A well run, balanced army can take out most any gimmick army. Gimmick armies, by definition, have only one or two real strengths, while a balanced army has some strength in many areas. If you are running the balanced army, just focus on those strengths that the enemy doesn't have.

Using *WH40K* as an example again, if the enemy has a lot of heavy weapons, cover them with blind and engage the enemy units in hand-to-hand as quickly as possible to erase the firepower advantage. If the enemy has close-range advantage, fight a mobile battle – fire and retreat, fire and retreat. Don't try to fight a gimmick army on their own ground – they are very good at what they do, they just don't do very much.

Well, enough of my soap-box for now. Next issue we will build an army for the new edition of *Warhammer Fantasy*, which seems to be about the biggest fantasy miniatures game going right now. If you have a preference as to the type of army we will build (Orc, Dwarf, Elf or Human), drop us a note between now and then. Til next time...

KC

Miniatures Game Review

Warhammer 40,000

Games Workshop
#0151 ◆ $59.95

After over a year of waiting, *Warhammer 40,000 (WH40K)* players finally got their second edition! Gone are the days of brawling over vague rules and interpreta-

tions of the original rules, the boxed edition is here to save the day.

That's how I felt when I heard it was really coming. After playing the first edition rules for over four years, seeing all the homebrewed solutions for rules conflicts, and creating my own so my friends and I wouldn't be forced to spill blood (at least not real blood), these rules are a welcome relief.

Don't get me wrong – I really liked the first edition, it was my first miniatures game. It's just that there were some very frustrating things, like powerfields, hand-to-hand with dreadnaughts, Orc Freebooterz, etc., that got to me.

The boxed set fixes all the known problems with the first edition. As an example, powerfields are totally different, hand-to-hand rules cover vehicles and dreadnaughts, the horrible gimmicky items from Freebooterz aren't in it ... I am finally at peace with the universe!

In addition to all the fixes, this box is a great value! The box has three books (the *Rulebook*, *Wargear*, and *Codex Imperialis*); two booklets (*Codex Army Lists* and a booklet of scenarios); and a slew of counters, templates, cards and cutout ruins. There are also (get this) *eighty plastic miniatures*! Twenty of the new Space Marines in Mk VII armor (or is it VIII?), twenty space Orcs, and forty Gretchin. They also tossed in fourteen dice – ten are normal d6s and four are special dice (scatter, artillery and sustained fire).

The books are filled with excellent illustrations and color photos, as is customary for GW products, and the three main books have color covers.

In general, the game has been simplified. You no longer have to concern yourselves with the movement cost for ninety degree turns, the vehicle targeting grids are gone, and jet pack landings are covered. The *Wargear* book gives complete definitions for all weapons, complete and without contradiction.

For you first timers, the game works like this: you build your miniature army based on an agreed upon amount of points. Then set-up a playing surface (the rules give you guidelines for distributing terrain and deployment zones). Before you start you should decide on an objective (new rules are provided) if you are going to have one, and/or set a turn/time limit.

Once you get started, the turns progress all the way through one player, then the other player takes his entire turn. During a player's turn he may move, fire ranged weapons, perform hand-to-hand combat and make psychic attacks. The hand-to-hand combat phase and psychic phase are the only time during the turn when both players are able to take action. During each hand-to-hand, both players can make attacks, and during the psychic phase, each player's psykers (those characters with psychic powers) may perform an action.

The game uses only six-sided dice and the special dice provided, and has simple rules for hitting and damaging the enemy It's relatively simple, though there is a lot to learn, but the books recommend that you keep them around for reference while you play.

Games Workshop has really made *WH40K* even better, and the boxed set is a great way to put it out. It has everything you need to play, even if you're a rash beginner and it's your first miniature game (as it was mine some four years ago). If you're into miniatures games, you have to get this one. If you're not, this may start you off.

Miniature Reviews

Baatezu the Pit Fiend and His Cornugons

Battlesystem Series
Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
Sculpted by Dave Summers
#11-950 ◆ 5mm ◆ $8 00

TSR's *Battlesystem*, a miniatures battle game system with rules for 25mm and 15mm, has never had 15mm support until Ral Partha began producing 15mm figures about a year ago. Dave Summers, a veteran at RP, has been responsible for a few of the new *Battlesystem* line blister packs.

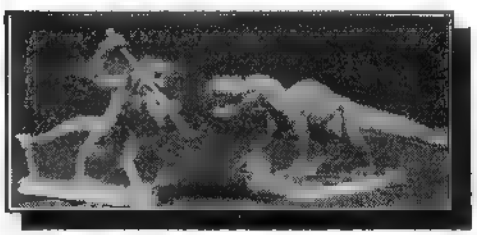
This blister, obviously bad guys, includes Baatezu and three identical Cornugons. Each comes in two pieces, the nasty is one piece and its wings another. There are many metal threads, but that's to be expected on small figures – the moldsman makes a number of small vents to allow the mold to fill completely. The threads clean up easily and without a trace.

There are some parting lines, on the back of the Cornugons' necks and tails and on Baatezu's head and left leg, but they are not significant and clean up nicely with a needle file. The wings all fit very well, but a little epoxy could be used to remove all traces of the joint.

Baatezu is heavily muscled and armed with a very interesting looking sword-thing that's very like a huge, multi-edged, serrated club. He's easily three times the size of other figures in this scale, making for a formidable addition to the gaming table. The detail of the face is very good, especially when you consider the scale.

The three Cornugons aren't quite as impressive as Baatezu on the table, but they still stand twice as tall as most humanoids and are quite horrific in appearance. The figures are well proportioned with very well defined torsos. The faces, while not as detailed as Baatezu's, are well done. If anyone knows a name for the weapons they carry, I'd love to know – but I'd hate to get hit by one (they look like Ginsu Halberds!).

Even if you don't play *Battlesystem*, these figures are large enough to use in 25mm games and fit the descriptions for a number of monsters in most role-playing games.



Ssahgar the Lizardman and Saurian Watchdog

The Titans of Terror Series
Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
Sculpted by Dennis Mize
#09-002 ◆ 25mm ◆ $6.95

Dennis, who has sculpted such incredible works as *Silver and Steel* in the past, shows off his talent in RP's latest line of Sculptor's Row *The Titans of Terror*. This blister holds three pieces: the giant lizard watchdog, Ssahgar, and

Ssahgar's weapon, all cast in RP's lead-free Ralidium™.

The watchdog, the largest piece of the set, has only a few threads of metal as evidence of its manufacture – there are no perceptible mold lines at all. Ssahgar has a couple threads from his hands and tail, with a barely noticeable mold line down the front of his left leg.

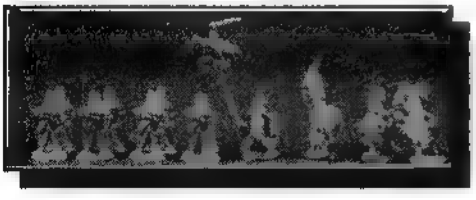
The weapon, some sort of short polearm, was bent in the package, but the new alloy is every bit as forgiving as lead, so it straightened out easily. It has small mold lines on top and bottom, but a needle file has no problem with them at all.

Artistically, these are great figures. The watchdog is huge and dangerous looking, posed for a quick charge. The detail of the head and mouth is incredible, and the multiple ridges down the back and sides of the creature add something to the overall feel as well. The base is a built up, rocky surface – it's great!

Ssahgar is in the midst of an attack, muscles taut, and his weapon will mount with the blade at the top or bottom. The protective shoulder covering, with a strap around the chest, and the heavy ceremonial dagger hung from his breach clout, are nice touches. Again, the head and face are highly detailed and will be a lot of fun to paint.

For a modeler, Ssahgar will modify easily. The metal is forgiving and his limbs aren't too thick for a simple position change. I'm not fond of the piece that connects his tail to the base, so I would remove it and change the position of the tail a little.

Gamers and collectors alike will be looking to get their hands on this blister.



Tethyamir Crossbowmen

Battlesystem Series
Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
Sculpted by Chris Atkin
#1-932 ◆ 15mm ◆ $7 00

More 15mm support for TSR's *Battlesystem*, these are dwarf crossbowmen. The blister contains fourteen figures: seven with crossbow to shoulder as if about to fire, five with crossbow down for reload, a standard bearer, and a unit commander.

There are quite a few metal threads, but they clean off easily and are necessary if the mold is to fill on smaller figures. There are minor parting lines on a few of the figures, but the lines are in easy to reach places for your needle file. Be careful when you are filing 15mm miniatures, however, because a small slip of the file will be much more noticeable here than on your 25mms.

The detail is very good for the scale. The dwarves reloading have plumed helms, plate mail and capes thrown over their shoulders, while the dwarves in a firing stance carry a shoulder bag and side arm.

The unit commander has a very nicely detailed helm with a high top and feathers. The standard bearer is the best individual piece. The standard is topped with a small dragon holding the banner in its claws and the details of the dwarf, from cloak to helm, are wonderful. Even the face and beard look more like they were sculpted at 25mm then shrunk (but that could only happen in a Disney movie ...).

Gretchin with Autogun

Warhammer 40,000 Series
Games Workshop
(Citadel/Marauder)
Sculpted by Kev Adams
#9026 ◆ 28mm ◆ $5.99

Supporting GW's latest big gaming release, the boxed edition of *Warhammer 40,000* (see the review elsewhere in this issue), there is a myriad of new figures being released.

These gretchin come three to a blister and are finely made. There are little or no metal threads and only barely perceptible mold lines.

The figures, for the Orc army, come equipped with autoguns and a variety of other specialty equipment – from grenade harnesses and ammo packs to shoulder bags and skull belt buckles. Each is very individual, typical of an Orc army, and they are all appropriately countenanced (dey iz makin' purty wif da teef!).

Gretchin are a necessary part of any *WH40K* Orc army – after all, the Orcs have to watch something get blown up while they move toward the action.

Juicers & A Crazy

Rifts Series
Palladium Books, Inc.
Sculpted by Jim Johnson
#8012 ◆ 25mm ◆ $7.95

This four figure pack, sculpted by Jim Johnson and manufactured by Rafm, is one of Palladium's latest releases for their successful role-playing game, *Rifts*.

All four figures have small amounts of metal thread while the Crazy has a moderate mold line down his left leg and left arm. One of the Juicers has a moderate line down his left and right sides. The Crazy will clean up easily, since the line doesn't cut through any detail, but the Juicer will take a bit of careful work to remove the line, with lightly applied needle files, while retaining the detail on the shoulder and arm.

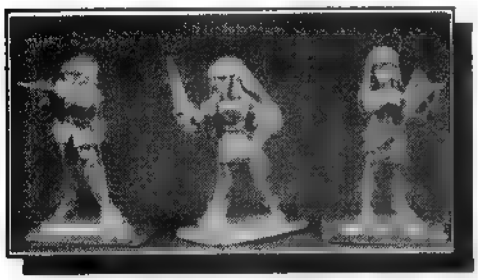
The figures are very nice. The Crazy is well armored, carries a rifle or assault weapon, and is poised for quick action. His facial expression clearly displays his mental state. The accessories (such as the sidearm holster, boot knife, and canteen), add those extra details that set the figure apart.

The three Juicers are all different in pose and look. The helmeted Juicer, with assault weapon and baton, is nicely detailed – from boots and leggings, to vest and shoulder pads. He carries a number of accessories also.

The other two Juicers have punk hair styles and are equipped and detailed similar to the first, but the weapons are different. One has a samurai style sword and is in a martial stance, while the other is drawing his boot knife while holding a

pistol. The detail is good and the figures are well proportioned.

In addition to *Rifts*, these characters could be used in a number of popular role-playing and miniature games.



Bards

Fantasy Series
Rafm Company, Inc.
Sculpted by Stephen Koo
#3694 ◆ 25mm ◆ $5.75

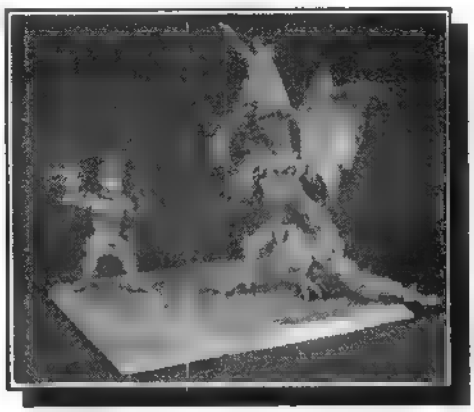
One of the big manufacturers in the industry over the last decade, Rafm continues to pour great figures. The latest additions to their Fantasy line are no exception – blisters upon blisters of female characters!

This set of bards has good variety, with flute, harp and mandolin players. There are a few metal threads, and a few noticeable mold lines. The harpist has the heaviest parting lines on her legs but, due to the low detail in the affected area, they are easily corrected with a good needle file.

Overall, these figures are very good and well detailed. The hair and short sword of the mandolin player make her stand out in the pack, while the detail of her cloak and dress, plus accessories like her scabbard and belt pouch, add the touches to make this a great figure (and my favorite).

The harpist also has very detailed, noticeable hair with a tiara, a low cut dress that dips to a V at her navel, and a detailed, link belt. Her ankles are proportioned strangely, though, and her mouth sits a little off the center of her face. There are numerous details, such as the choker mounted pendant and arms covered with jewelry, that accentuate the positive in the figure.

The flautist's pulled back hair reveals her ears, showing her to be an elf. Her clothing is that of a traveling minstrel, with trimmed tunic, a short cowled cloak and leggings. The long sword at her side demonstrates her willingness to defend herself. The detail is very good on this figure, right down to her flip-tongued boots and the way she puts her heart into her music, as evidenced by her closed eyes while she's playing.



Dragon Knight

Diorama Series
Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures
Sculpted by Tom Meier
#1034 ◆ 25mm ◆ $13.95

Tom Meier has been busy in his workshop, sculpting more of T-Bolt's incredible *Diorama* releases. Dragon Knight depicts a stalwart knight fighting a truly incredible creature that has already bested, and is clutching, another knight who has seen better days.

The figures have numerous metal threads but, as I mentioned earlier, these are necessary to ensure that the fine details fill completely during the manufacturing process. Threads generally clean off easily and without a trace. There is a barely perceptible parting line down the monster's torso and light paring lines on the standing knight's shield and helm.

The diorama comes in six pieces, including the knight's weapon. (He comes with a selection of three swords.) The monster is a three piece model – the left arm, with knight victim and his wings, being separate. Both the knight and monster must be mounted to their base.

The detail of this piece is staggering. The beast's head and face are extremely life-like and the detail of the skin, armor and limbs is great. The definition of the torso armor and back plates is really impressive. The wings are light and fit perfectly to the back of the creature. The arm fits snugly to the shoulder as well. Even the base is detailed with a partial skeleton and battlefield refuse, such as broken weapons and shields.

The knight's shield emblem is a dragon and his helm bears a like ornament. The armor is well defined and bears an emblem around the neck of the knight. The only bad mark that I could possibly give this model is that the legs of the knight are a little short for him.

The fallen knight, hereafter known as "the dead guy," is also a good piece of work. The armor is highly detailed and his position is perfect. He may actually only be unconscious, since there is no evidence of serious physical harm other than a nasty dent in the back of the helmet. Now if only his friend could gain his freedom before lunchtime....

Ghasts

Call of Cthulhu Series
Rafm Company, Inc.
Sculpted by Bob Murch
#2942 ◆ 25mm ◆ $5.25

More support for Chaosium's popular *Call of Cthulhu* game, based on the writings of H.P. Lovecraft. These figures will drive the most hardened investigator insane.

This blister contains two ghast miniatures, plus a stake with a skull on it. There are only a few threads on the figures and barely noticeable parting lines. The workmanship is excellent.

The detail is good on both figures with visible muscle sinews, furry backs and huge, toothy mouths. The cavernous eye sockets and heavy bone structure make the heads look very like a bare skull, while the chimp-like hands and wrists give the figures another worldly appearance (as it should have). The feet (?) are jointed in

much the same was as an animal's, with long, sharp claws.

The skull stake would serve as a warning at the boundary of these monsters' domain, to scare off creatures more intelligent than humans (because as you all know from watching countless horror/adventure movies – humans are *never* smart enough to stop at such a warning).

These models would prove useful for far more than *Call of Cthulhu*, so don't let the label keep you from getting them – creatures of this description could be found in any one of a dozen role-playing games.

Kragg the Grim

Warhammer Fantasy Battle Series
Games Workshop
(Citadel/Marauder)
Sculpted by Michael Perry
#9023 ◆ 28mm ◆ $7.99

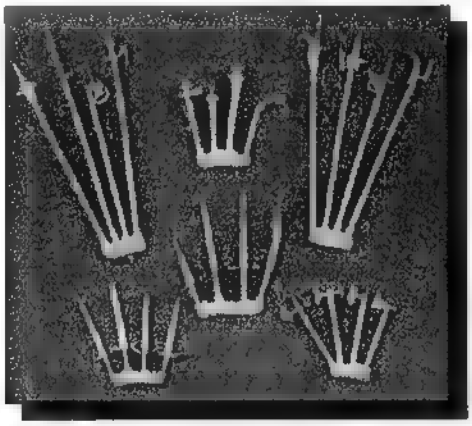
Following the release of their successful *Warhammer Fantasy Battle* boxed edition, Games Workshop has flooded us with fine metal figures to support it. Right now they have a number of releases for Dwarf armies.

Kragg the Grim, a Dwarf Runelord, is a mighty figure of a Dwarf. With a huge warhammer, clan symbol held aloft, and personal back banner, even an Orc could figure out who commanded the Dwarf army

There are a few metal threads and a negligible mold line across the warhammer, clan symbol staff and the right hand, but it all cleans off easily.

The detail is great on this Dwarf hero (with a fur cloak, anvil topped helm, and standard), and his full beard tucked under a highly detailed belt. The warhammer has a Dwarf symbol front and back, and the facial detail is a must see.

Even though I run an Orc and Goblin army, you have to respect a Dwarf with his presence.



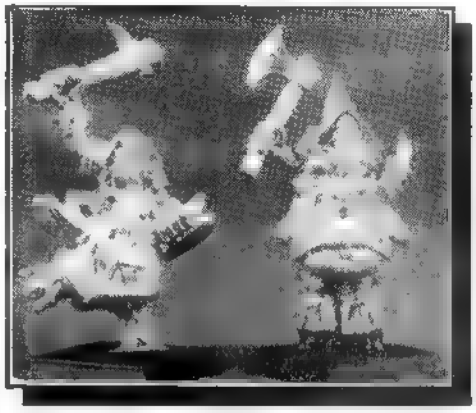
Medieval Hand Weapons
Medieval Polearms

Weapons Pack Series
Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures
Sculpted by Tom Meier
#3096 & #3097
25mm ◆ $6.95 each

Thunderbolt Mountain's new alloy, Bobinium, is a very hard metal that allows them to cast weapons to a perfect 25mm scale. The weapons are also strong enough to handle the rigors of game play without bending or breaking.

The good people at T-Bolt dared me to test their strength, and I must admit – they are *tough*! Don't get me wrong, if you want to bad enough, you can break them – but it won't happen on accident.

These weapons are well detailed, well proportioned, and *to scale*. For hobbyists that like to modify and convert, these are what we've been waiting for. Even for non-modelers who just want to replace that huge, clunky sword with one that's a little more proportioned for the figure – this may introduce you to the world of modifications. It's very easy to cut off most weapons and replace them with another. Each blister contains 40+ weapons.



Goblin Squig Hoppers

Warhammer Fantasy Battle Series
Games Workshop
(Citadel/Marauder)
Sculpted by Kev Adams
#9021 ◆ 28mm ◆ $5.99

These come one to a blister, but there is a range of figures so, even though the stock number may be the same, the figures are different. Two appear in the picture so you can see what I mean.

The figures have only the smallest of metal threads and very little visible parting line. What there is will clean up quickly with a needle file. Technically speaking, these are very good pieces.

The detail is very sharp on these squig mounted goblins. For those of you who are saying "What's a squig?" – it's a cave thing that goblins capture and then drive or ride into battle. Only night goblins have them and they are quite dangerous (sometimes more to the goblins than their enemy), but that's half the fun.

The facial expressions of both the squigs and goblins are great – cruel and nasty, the way they should be. The goblin riders are wearing the pointy, hooded robes that are the hallmark of the night goblin hordes. While they may not be highly reliable on the battlefield, they'll sure be a blast to paint.

Company Information

Games Workshop
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Rafm Company, Inc.
20 Parkhill Road East
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(519) 623-4832 (519) 623-2795 Fax
Catalog: $3.00

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures
656 East McMillan
Cincinnati, OH 45206-1991
(800) 235-3908
Mail Order: Yes
Catalog: Yes (enclose 2 stamps)

Looking Ahead ...

For those of you who like to keep up on new or future releases, we'll keep you as up to date as the manufacturers keep us!

Palladium just released five new packs: *Cyber Adventurers* (8016), *Rogues & Scout #1* (8017), *Brodkil & Witchling* (8018), *Damaged Skelebots #2* (8019) and *Psi-Stalkers & Scouts #1* (8020). With the exception of *Brodkil*, which is $8.95, the rest of the packs are $7.95. Grenadier has just released three blisters for their *Nightmares* line, each $5.99 Mark Copplestone is doing a series called *Future Warriors* which just released blisters of *Heavy Metal Maniacs* and *Heavy Metal Madmen* priced at $4 each. In addition, Grenadier has released some resin vehicles for *Future Warrior*. New sets for *Warlords* and *Lost Lands* went on sale this month also.

If you manufacture or distribute miniatures and would like to get your products reviewed, or just announce upcoming releases, please let me know! ❑

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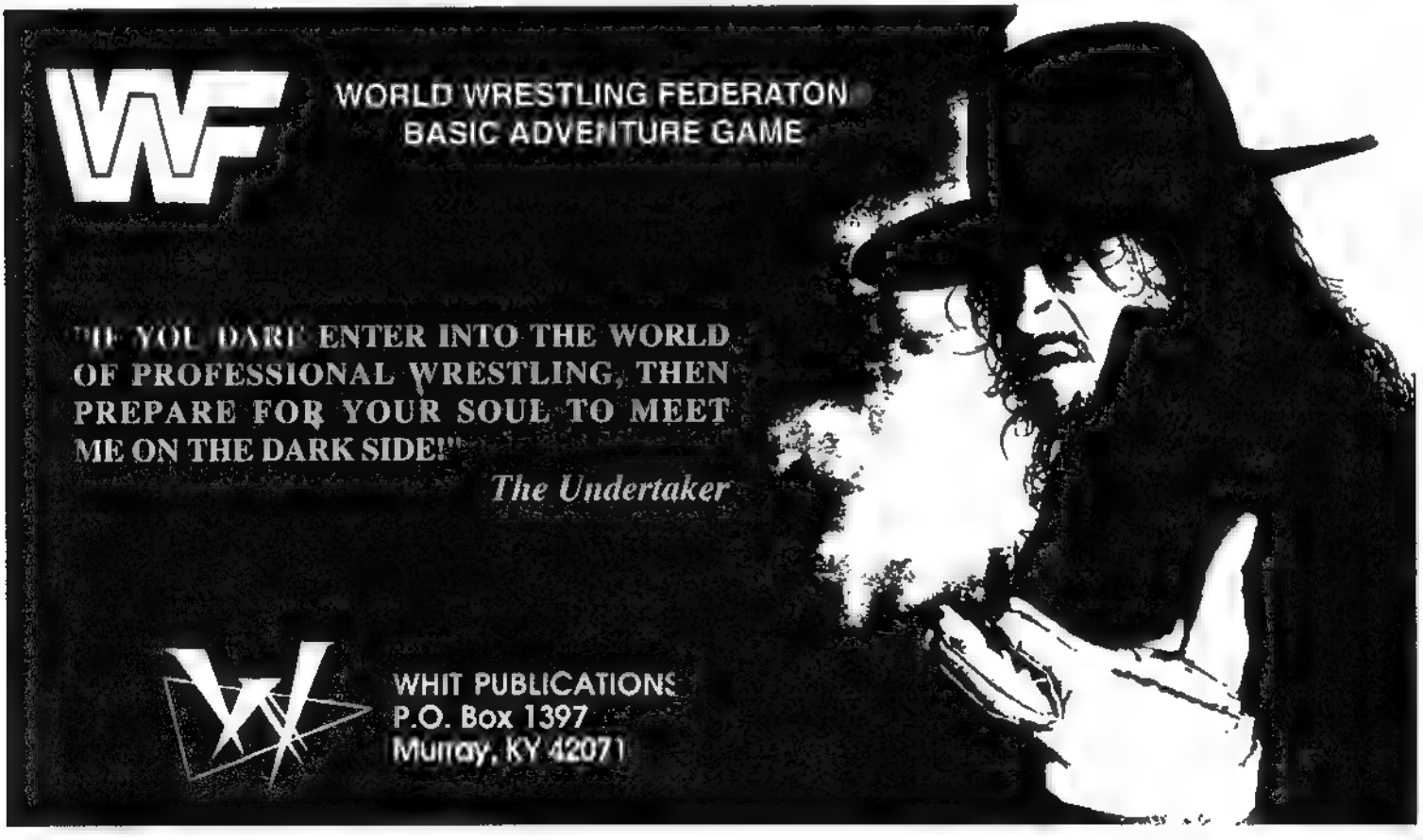

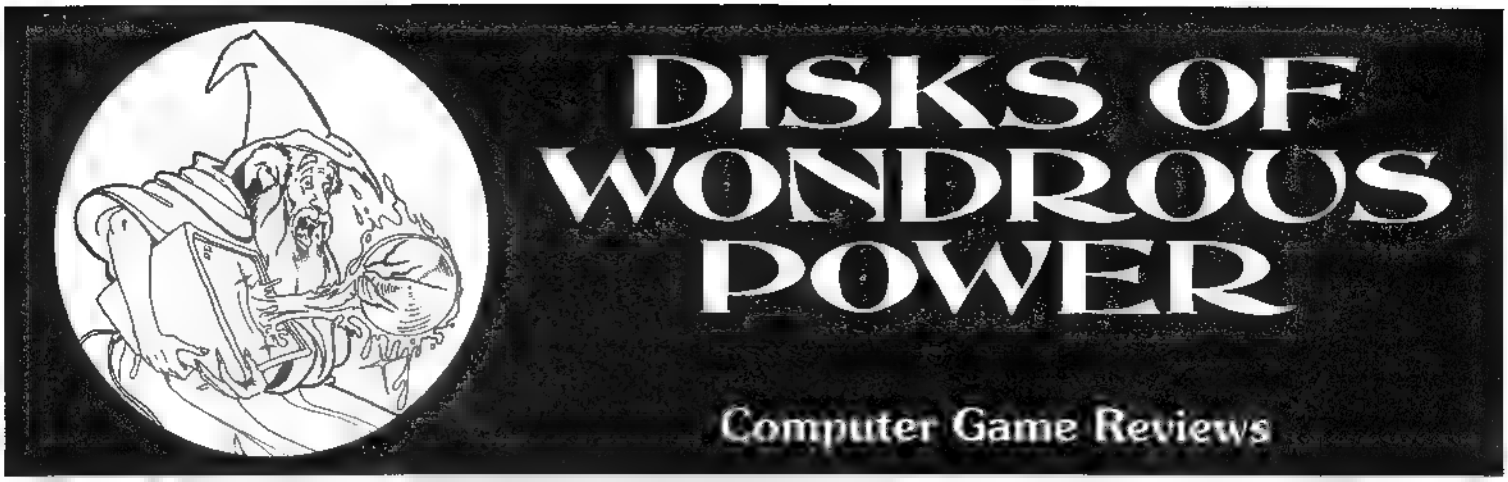

Barcode Battler
Irwin Toys, Ltd.
Stand-alone System
Reviewed by B.A. Felton

There's a secret war being waged in homes across the United States, Canada and Japan. Casualties are high in this fierce conflict. As a result, there is a scramble to find new recruits. Somewhere out there the ultimate warrior has yet to be discovered and he could be the one to bring victory to his side.

This is a strange war. For it is not being fought between men, but between products off the grocery store shelves. A pack of Oscar Meyer hotdogs reportedly packs 3,700 attack points. And Ivory soap is a virtual fortress with 2,700 defense points. A Snickers bar, sadly, is a lame opponent

This is all made possible with Irwin Toys' new product, ***Barcode Battler***. The game is already a runaway success in Japan, where it is expected over 1.6 million units will be sold this year. Now, the game hits the U.S. market, and Irwin hopes to repeat that success here. They have good reason to be optimistic. Last year electronic toy sales rose 20%.

Barcode Battler is a small stand-alone game machine that comes with a built-in barcode reader. Simply cut the barcode off of any product and slide it through the scanner. The Barcode Battler quickly reads the digital information and uses it to create unique characters with varying strengths and weaknesses. Some products may even have magical abilities, enabling the player to cast spells.

Two players enter their barcode selections and pit one product against another. Any product is fair game (sodas, toilet paper, magazines, etc.). As long as it has a barcode, it can be used

A Quick Lesson in Barcodes

Barcodes have become a way of life for consumers. It's an inexpensive and swift way to identify and price products. Barcoding eliminates hand-recording and inputting of data, and speeds up check-out time at the cash register. Virtually every product sold in the U.S. has one.

If barcodes seem very cryptic and mysterious that's only because we humans have not been taught to read them. Each barcode is comprised of twelve digits. The first digit is for department identification. The next five digits are the manufacturer's code, the following five digits contain specific product identification and information such as color and size. The final digit is called the "check" digit. It helps the barcode scanner ensure that all twelve digits were read correctly.

Killer Barcodes

Since no two products have the same barcode, fans of the game are on a never-ending quest to find the ultimate barcode. This means that once a "killer" barcode is discovered, news quickly spreads.

In Japan, where the game was first introduced, certain products which produced champion warriors were quickly bought up off the shelves creating shortages. Are we seeing the future here? If a game can influence the sales of common products, it's only a matter of time before some enterprising designer strikes a deal with a company. The word on the street is that several other companies are developing their own barcode games.

The whole issue is sure to draw critics as well as supporters, so expect to hear more about it as the games becomes more popular.

Playing the Game

Barcode Battler is a simple game. After inputting the barcodes, players take turns slugging at each other by hitting their attack buttons. If their character happens to have magic, they can cast a variety of spells that do such things as increase attacking power, recover life energy, decrease an enemy's life energy, etc. Different spells require various amounts of magical energy.

The game screen is a simple Liquid Crystal display. No fancy graphics or icons here, only a series of digital read-outs that show each character's attack, defense, and life energies.

Play continues until one player dies. Then there is a scramble to find new barcodes in order to defeat the champion

Verdict

So, should you run out and shell out forty-nine dollars for the game? Well, that depends. This game is definitely aimed at younger players. Kids between the ages of eight and fourteen will definitely love the game and, undoubtedly, will get into

barcode fever. Expect your cupboards to be raided and any barcodes therein to be lifted.

As far as us older folks, you'll probably play one or two games and then be left wondering what all the fuss is about. It won't hold your interest very long. There simply isn't enough strategy or complexity to hold one's interest

Don't give up hope though. There are plans to enhance the technology. It's only a matter of time before more sophisticated games will come along using barcodes. Barcode Battler is already a marketing success so expect to see many imitators in the future.

Spaceward Ho!
Delta Tao Software
IBM & Macintosh
Reviewed by Dirk DeJong

I am a firm believer that there has never been, nor ever will be, a perfect game. There are simply too many factors of design and taste to be considered and fought over for any single game to be all things to all people. Still, there are a few games that have managed to come closer than the rest of their competition and ***Spaceward Ho!*** is among them.

An outwardly simple game (the Mac version's manual is 5"x5" with less than forty pages of good sized type and lots of pictures), with an elegant interface in both PC and Mac versions, ***Spaceward Ho!*** is a game of galactic conquest where you can indulge your fantasies of bettering Darth Vader as lord of all you survey.

You're given a number of choices during the setup, including how many human and/or computer opponents you want to face, what skill level to play at, what the level of artificial intelligence will be, and the size, shape and density of your galaxy. Everything's done by point-and-click so you don't spend time figuring out how to program a specific setup. In fact, most game mechanics are either point-and-click or click-and-pull (using interactive sliding bars for monetary expenditures, etc.). The graphics are excellent, and the color version (B&W is included in the package) is simply stunning. You'll find yourself relying on the pictures to convey information much more than the written info presented. Everything possible has been done to ensure that you won't be fighting the game interface instead of your opponents.

Game play is relatively simple, consisting of allocating money (for ship-building, R&D, mining metal for ships, terraforming worlds, or building new colonies) and sending out ships (to explore, conquer, or colonize various planets). It is in this area that the current Mac and PC versions differ most, as the Mac version revamped the money allocation system to let you get on with the game to an even greater degree, and includes three items not in the PC version – alliances, radical research, and the Armageddon device. (A PC version with these items is planned.) But, even with simple game play and goals, this game has many levels of difficulty and paths to victory. I've played each Mac version and have yet to become bored. Ship-building, in particular, is interesting as you have seven items on each ship to decide on – type of ship (colony ship, scout, fighter, or defense satellite), name of class, range, speed, weapons, shields, and miniaturization. Each choice changes the development and production time and cost in terms of both money and metals, so you have to make trade-offs. Each change also brings up a different ship's picture, so a fighter with Range 7, Speed 4, Weapons 5, Shields 3, and Miniaturization 1 looks nothing like a colony ship with Range 9, Speed 2, Weapons 3, Shields 7, and Miniaturization 0. An esthetic, and not play-necessary feature, but one that adds to the feel of the game. And many of the rest of the graphics are very much in the same vein – they don't add any features, they just make things more fun.

All in all, this is one game that shouldn't be passed over by any budding overlord of the universe, whether he be Mac or PC based. Most systems (including laptops) will run it, leading to many hours happily spent conquering all your foes. As a final note, it is network play compatible, so you can get all your coworkers hooked too. Just don't tell your boss I suggested it. ❑

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ELECTRONIC FRONTIERS

Exploring the World of Online Gaming

by D.M. & E.A. Millheim

Welcome to *Electronic Frontiers*, devoted entirely to the rapidly expanding world of gaming online! Welcome, indeed! We plan to take you with us on our intrepid explorations of the nation's networks, show you around, and bring to light what's available out there for gamers with computer plus modem. The online frontier we will wander together is vast, and its resources are barely tapped.

The roots were laid when the first computer file was transferred via modem; the tree branched out when national communications networks first opened their doors to customers. Someone discovered that online, you can be who you aren't, and the disembodied typist at the other end of the phone line became a being that fueled the imagination. And, from there, the tree caught fire.

We begin with a general introduction. From here, we will explore the nation's networks. There is much to see, and we have but begun....

The sweat from your brow stings your eyes as you feverishly work with flint and steel to bring a torch to life. You finally get the thing sputtering, and its reddish-orange glow bathes the dark area ahead: an access way into what looks like some kind of mound. An old stairway leads down into the belly of the blackness. You advance farther, the ancient wood worked stairs groan and protest at the weight you're putting on it after gods-know-how-long. Then, to your dismay, the step under your foot gives way. You find yourself seated half a floor below amidst dust, rubble and a silent chorus of "LOL" (Laughing Out Loud) from the other members of your party.

LOL? Where'd that come from?

Gaming via computer presents a completely new facet to the world of role-playing. Instead of sitting around a table with friends eating chips and guzzling soda, the online gamer sits lonely before the computer, silently engaging in a world that puts people from across the globe together into one small, dank dungeon. While there are many differences and a few drawbacks to online gaming, the isolation and lack of players' faces to look at can enhance the role-playing experience. It's worth the time to learn the "protocol" (those silly little acronyms like LOL or symbols like :) or :(or :/ which mean smiling, frowning, and perplexed, respectively) and to understand a few of the diversities of gaming online.

What You Need

With a computer, modem and telecommunications software, access is easy to a huge number of local or nationwide Bulletin Board Systems (BBSes) that generally have some type of area set up for RPG gamers. That sounds tougher than it is, really, though the more conversant you are with a computer, the better you'll be at online gaming. You'll also save a lot of money – online services charge by the minute and the more familiar you are, the less you will spend. Some online systems are easier to use and/or cheaper, so it helps to take the time to learn a bit about them first.

The variation of games and styles online is rich indeed While the most popular game types are still fantasy-esque, everything else from horror to science fiction to super heroes can be found online. Not every hobby store has unlimited gaming space and half a hundred people who run a wide range of games, but that's what's available through the wizardly link of a phone line.

And, since no one can see you, you can play in your jammies or birthday suit, if that pleases you.

Some Problems

As wonderful as all that may sound, there are a few things that a "Natural 20" will not save you from. One is the temperament of the phone lines themselves. A thunderstorm in the area may result in a sudden loss of connection, which means that, at least until you get back online (not always an easy task), you're out of the game. Worse yet is the demon Call Waiting, which often not only results in a lost connection, but also a 10-minute argument with someone selling tickets to the latest Barry Manilow concert. Aunt Gertrude, picking up the phone and not realizing it's being used for connection for the computer, will also quickly win a disconnect. There are precautions you can take – like temporarily disconnecting Call Waiting or sand bagging your aunt in the cellar until you're finished with the game – but they don't always make you popular, and they don't always work.

The Real Fantasy

Even with the occasional online problems, a wonderful trade-off is that the role-player will discover the binds of physical form dropped. When a six-foot-three-inch hulk of human maleness chooses to play a gruff dwarf that's ... well ... short, the people at the other end of the modem connection can't see him, so he's free to be his gruff dwarfish self. When the paper, maps, figures and faces are removed, imagination is what's left, so no one can ever dispute that he is anything but four feet tall and two hundred pounds.

For those who are much more accustomed to face-to-face gaming, this aspect will be culture shock. Frequently, off-line gamers are friends outside of the gaming session, which means they see each other a lot. But unless you're prepared to spend huge sums of money on plane tickets,

online gamers rarely get to meet. And, worst of all, you can't have everyone chip in for the Coke-and-munchie run.

An abundant range of playing styles and personalities can be found all around the country, and a lot of them are online. Being exposed to this can add a treasure trove of ideas for improving your own live RPG arsenal. For the game master who has encountered the pitfall of "Roll a D20; okay, you miss," online gaming can revitalize the creative juices. Online it would go like this: "Roll a D20. (pause) The sword blade whispers from its scabbard, creating a silver slash under the stars. It bites a vicious wound across the would-be attacker's temple. The man crumples to his knees as he tries to staunch the blood welling up between his fingers. Okay, now roll your damage." (How does one "roll" dice through a computer? Glad you asked. Most computer systems have a simple command you can send, just like a comment, and the mainframe – the large computer your small computer is attached to via the phone lines – translates the command to a random dice roll. So no, it isn't easier to cheat on dice rolls online.)

Tell Me A Secret

Another aspect that gamers would be accustomed to in an off-line game is the necessary pass of a slip of paper to the Gamemaster. In an online game, private messages, unseen by any but the sender and recipient, replace those nerve-wracking scraps of paper. Truly, the subject of the notes never knows what hit him, or even suspects.

And for those who like to keep records, the game can be "logged" much as a tape recorder would record a session. The computer will spit a file back up which has all the dialogue, all the action of the game in it, exactly as it happened. Just for the packrat in all of us.

Message Unclear, Repeat

Role-players don't have to be computer wizards to join an online game. No, all you need is a computer and a willingness to learn enough about it to go online and play. With computer prices continually dropping these days, they're moving into a lot more people's price ranges. Just take a look at your game shelf. Bored? How much did you spend on all that stuff? Well, here's an entirely new form of gaming to try

Whether you're a GM or just a player, you'll find either a new gaming world to explore online or at least pick up some ideas for your own group. Be it thirst for further adventure or to tap into the talent of the online gamemasters, the realm stretches from coast to coast. Its only a phone call away. ❑

AMERICA Online

Wouldn't it be great to have direct access to the designers and writers of your favorite games? Maybe you'd just like to say "hi" or get an answer to a some question about a game that is eating at you. Well, good news! Virtually every game company has a representative on most of the popular online services. American Online is no exception. The Online Gaming Forum of AOL is one of the best supported and most popular. You can get a free online kit from AOL just for the asking. AOL supports both Macintosh and PCs.

The following is a list of screen-names for the game companies currently active on AOL. Drop them some e-mail and tell them that SHADIS sent you.

Online Game Representatives

Atlas Games .... John Nephew (AtlasGames)
Avalon Hill RPGs Ken Rolston (KenRolston)
Avalon Hill War .... Jim Rose (AHGames)
Black Dragon Press ... C. Murcray (BDPress)
BTRC . . .. Greg Porter (BTRC)
Chaosium ..... Sam Shirley (Chaosium)
Columbia Games ..... Craig Besinque (C Besinque)
Command Magazine ..... Ty Bomba (TyroneB998)
Crunchy Frog Ent. ..... P. Lidberg (Frog God)
FASA Corporation ..... Tom Dowd (FASA Tom)
Fat Messiah Games ..... Neal Sofge (Neal S)
GDW ..... Loren Wiseman (GDW Games)
Games Workshop U.S. ... Frank Barich (GamesW)
Hero Games ..... Bruce Harlick (Bruce HH)
Iron Crown Enterprises ...Terry Amthor (TerBob)
Leading Edge Games ..... Jay Adan (LEGames)
Marquee Press ..... Joe Williams (MarqueePrs)
Mayfair Games ..... Ray Winninger (Mayfair)
Metropolis Ltd .....Terry Amthor (Lictor)
Nightshift Games ..... Dave Lincoln (NS Editor)
Pagan Publishing ..... John Tynes (Pagan Pub)
Prometheus Press . Thaddeus Howze (Elric 1701)
R. Talsorian Games . Mike McDonald (Talsorian)
Ragnarok Enterprises . Dave Nalle (RagnarokGC)
SHADIS Magazine . Jolly R. Blackburn (JollyGood)
Soldiers and Swords ... Pete Kofira (SSG Games)
Stellar Games Inc. ..... Lee Cerny (Stellar LC)
S. Jackson Games .. Chris McCubbin (Cwm Inord)
The Armory ..... David Barrash (Meoff)
The Gamer Magazine Scott Haring (The Gamer)
Tri Tac Systems . Richard Tucholka (Tucholka)
West End Games Bill Olhmesdahl (Stomper)
White Wolf Studios Travis Williams (Bruyah1)
Wizards of the Coast . .. Steve Martin (WotC)

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Issue #11

READER SURVEY

Go Ahead, Guess!!

Here is your chance to let us know what you think of SHADIS Magazine. Please take a few moments and rate each article. (1 being the worst, 5 being the best.) Completed surveys will be entered in a monthly drawing and winners will receive free game products and other prizes. So what are you waiting for?

1	2	3	4	5	
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Cries from the Attic
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Mail Bag
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Of Technomancy and Wyrmships
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Game Scryer
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❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... The Magic Continues
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❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Closer Look
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Just A Matter of Time: Part One
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Zine Scene
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Bits n' Pieces
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... New Perspectives
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Disks of Wondrous Power
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❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Board Walk
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Post Marque
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Market Platz
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Bright Future
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... The Adventures of Joe Genero
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	..... Knights of the Dinner Table

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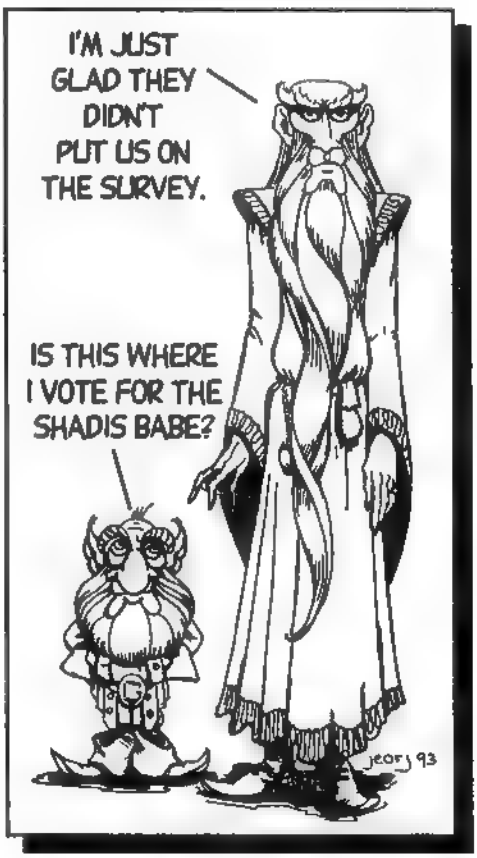

Send your completed survey to:

SHADIS Survey
17880 Graystone Avenue
#203
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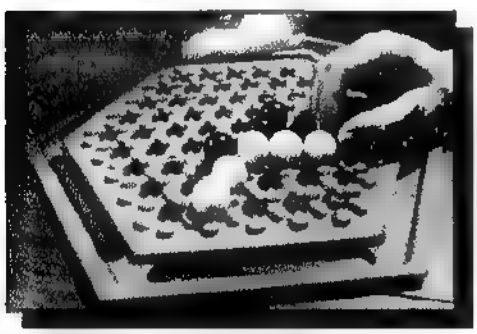
BOARD WALK

Board Game Reviews

Welcome to the first installment of *Board Walk*. This new column is yet another example of SHADIS' efforts to broaden our coverage of the game industry



Abalone

Galoob
Strategy ◆ No Solitaire
Low Complexity ◆ 2 Players

This game is so addictive that we were forced to hide it because no work was getting done at the office.

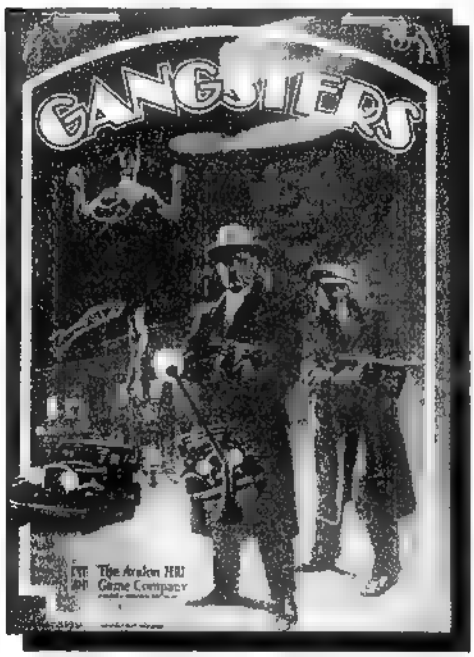
Abalone is a very deceptive game. It is as simple as checkers to learn. A neophyte can usually pick up the basics in less than a minute.

The game is played with twenty-eight marbles on a hexagon board. At first glance, it resembles chinese checkers. ***Abalone*** is not a "jump" game, however. The ingenious board design allows you to push your opponent's marbles.

As long as you outnumber your opponent in marbles along a straight line, you can push his marbles one space. The object of the game is to push six of his marbles off the side of the board.

Sounds simple huh? That's where ***Abalone*** is deceptive. Players quickly realize this game has all the intrigue of chess. Games that once took a few minutes to resolve suddenly turn into browbeating bouts that take up to an hour to resolve. Add to this the addictive nature of the game and you have a classic family game. My highest recommendations for this game!

Scott Johnson



Gangsters

Avalon Hill
Historical Simulation
No Solitaire ◆ Low Complexity
2-5 Players

Tired of playing the good guys all the time? Tired of being politically correct? We all grew up playing cops and robbers but lately it seems playing the "robbers" just isn't socially acceptable anymore.

Well, apparently Don Greenwood remembers how much fun it was to play the bad guy. ***Gangsters*** is a highly entertaining board game that pits rival gangsters against each other in the Roaring Twenties

Each player represents a gang who is attempting to build a syndicate that will rule Chicago before the police can restore order.

Each Gang has three elements: Racketeers, Thugs and Vamps. The Racketeers are the "brains" of the outfit, purchasing properties to front the rackets while controlling the number of moves each player can make. Thugs are the "muscle" that extort funds from the populace and knock off opposing "joints." Vamps are molls that can lure opposing gangsters to switch allegiance.

Gangsters compete for the public's patronage which inevitably leads to gang wars. They also have to contend with the police in an era where justice can be bought.

Gangsters is very simple to learn and play, but is strong in the strategy department. Players must decide if and when they should invest their loot in improved weaponry, communications and bribes – or tough it out and go for a quick win made possible with unspent profits. Timing is essential.

Part of the game's charm is its sense of humor. Cops can be deterred from their duties by placing "donut" markers on them or bribing them.

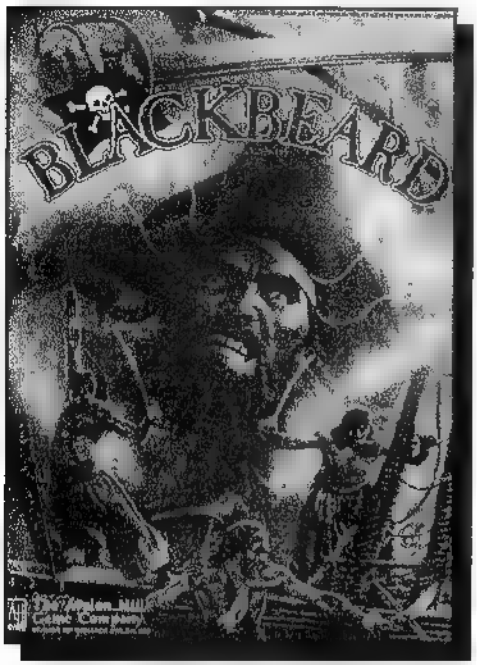
During the course of a game, players may encounter arrests, public outcry, extortion, police raids, seduction and more. All of this goes toward recreating the atmosphere of the Prohibition era.

Gangsters comes with a full-color mounted gameboard, counters, four player aid cards, rulebook, play money, five six-sided dice and a water pistol. (Huh?)

The water pistol is used to drench your adversaries when you make a hit on his gang – not mandatory for play, but great fun if you happen to be doing the shooting.

Gangsters is a lot of fun to play. These days, there just aren't enough game designers out there who remember that games can and should be fun, as well as entertaining. I recommend this game whole-heartedly. Some purists may squawk about the "bad guys" approach but I don't think this game will cause Jr. to start up his own speak-easy or turn him toward painted women.

B A. Felton



Blackbeard
Avalon Hill
Historical Simulation ◆ Solitaire
Average Complexity ◆ 1-4 Players

One thing I've always loved about Avalon Hill games is that they teach players a lot about history and dispel many of the myths we've picked up from the movies and popular fiction.

Blackbeard recreates "The Golden Age of Piracy" at the turn of the 18th Century. Each player represents one or more pirates as he attempts to amass a fortune in ill-gotten treasure and retire before falling prey to fate. Players work both sides of the law. The pace is dictated by a Fast Action card system that brings merchants over the horizon to be plundered or ports to be raided and sacked.

There are many dangers for the pirate, including warships, king's commissioners and even his own crew!

Merchant ships, their cargo holds filled with riches and supplies, are the targets. Hopefully a little luck, skill, and cunning will bring a Spanish or Mogul Treasure ship within range of your cannons as you comb the seas.

Blackbeard has it all. Your pirates will have to contend with storms, hull rot, mutiny, blockades, and even scurvy.

Although ***Blackbeard*** is an excellent face-to-face game with up to four players, I feel its real drawing point is its suitability as an excellent solitaire game.

This game was bestowed with the honor of Best Board Game by *Origins* this year and with good reason. Included with the game are two mounted gameboards, a sixteen-page rulebook, counters, a deck of twenty-four pirate cards, forty action cards, eight ship logs, and two six-sided dice.

This is definitely one of those games that won't sit on the shelf gathering dust. I give it my highest recommendation.

So hoist the Jolly Rodger, sharpen your saber, and hit the high seas!

B.A. Felton ❑

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POST MARQUE

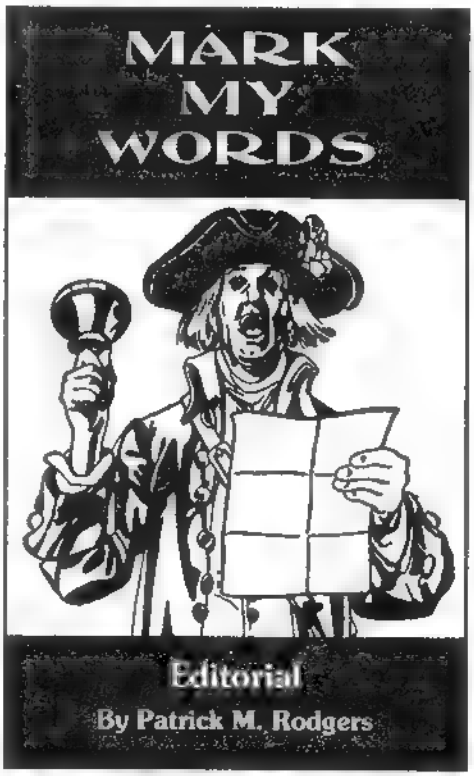
Special Play-By-Mail Section

Edited by Patrick M. Rodgers

AndCon was a huge success for *Post Marque*/SHADIS. Many fine PBM companies and personalities were in attendance, and I sincerely hope that the turnout from the PBM community will be even larger next year. Midnight Games won the award for "Best PBM Vendor of Show," with an impressive display for *Legends*.

Fractal Dimensions won the award for "Best PBM Event of Show" for their debut game, *A Duel of a Different Color*. Competition in this category was intense. Other entries included Reality Simulations (24-hour Round-the-Clock Duelmasters Tournament), Flying Buffalo (Heroic Fantasy Tournament), Eckert Gaming Group (Ship Design Contest), HCS Games (*Stellar Realms* Demo), Anarchy by Mail (*Galactic Anarchy* Demo), Deltax Games (*World Emperor II* Demo), Monastic Software (*You're An Amoeba, Go!* demo), Graaf Simulations (*Realms of Fantasy* demo and *Continental Rails* demo) and Guy M. Games (*Freak Out!* Tournament). SHADIS was disappointed to discover that "handing out free magazines" did not constitute an event, and were grateful to the 1,000 conventioneers (with the same handwriting) who voted for them nonetheless. To allay fears of a few industry nay-sayers, Enchanted Horizons is promising a full refund of all turn fees for any games not completed, should they cease operations for any reason. Additionally, they are now offering a money-back guarantee on all *Portinium* setups. The fact that they won the AndCon award for "Best PBM Product of Show" for *Portinium* makes this offer even more intriguing. (Enchanted Horizons can be contacted at PO Box 28250, Spokane WA 99228-8250).

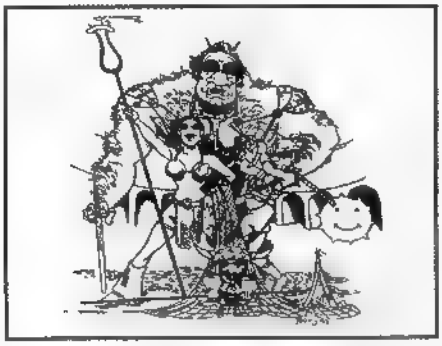
Alas, *Post Marque* readers will be sad to hear that the *Matrix* game discussed in SHADIS is not a PBM Several readers contacted me to ask about the game. Details are available in this issue of



SHADIS, but the main point to our readers is that SHADIS is not running a PBM game now, and has no plans to in the future. We offered *Alderac PBM* as a free game to subscribers in the past, but we've long since retired the game. We're going to spend our time reviewing, enhancing, and reporting on games that are already out there. I'd like to direct your attention to the advertisements in this issue from *Paper Mayhem* and *Flagship Magazine*. Each of these magazines is devoted solely to coverage of the PBM industry, and contain much in the way of helpful information. *Paper Mayhem* recently released the seventh edition of the *Journal of the PBM Gamer*, which is highly recommended to anyone interested in joining the PBM hobby. *Flagship* offers $20 worth of game credit from participating companies with a subscription, which makes the subscription essentially free. Both magazines are excellent publications and valuable resources for PBM gamers.

Speaking of *Flagship*, Bob Bost has retired as the editor of the US edition. Joey Browning has stepped in to fill the post, and the transition shows every indication of being a smooth one. What's Bob up to now? For the answer to that question, you need look no further than the pages of *Post Marque*. In a future issue of *Post Marque*, we will be publishing a directory of all PBM companies with Internet addresses. If you game with companies that have Internet addresses, we'd appreciate it if you sent us a list. Companies are welcome to submit their Internet addresses to us as well. Naturally, you can e-mail us; *Post Marque*'s Internet address is Shadiseast@aol.com.

Finally, a special thank you to Trevor Hughes and Russell Brutscher for their assistance in the relocation of our East Coast office. Who says good help is hard to find? ❑



Welcome to Play-by-Mail (PBM) Gaming

The postal gaming industry has existed for over twenty years. At present, there are over 300 games in operation in the United States alone. From two to 2,000 players participate in each game. When a player joins a game, the person or company who moderates the game will inform the player of the nature of his starting position. The player then decides on a course of action, and mails his response back to the moderator. The moderator collects all of the responses from the players, processes them, and sends all players a new status report. This process (called a "turn") is then repeated.

There are many different categories of PBM games, covering many genres. Most are computer moderated, which means that the moderator takes the players' input and enters it into a computer. The impartial computer performs all calculations and determines the results of the players' actions, and then prints out a new status report for all players. Players need not have a computer to participate, nor do they need to know "computer language."

Some games end when a predetermined set of conditions has been met (e.g. when the Germans capture Paris, or when someone has found the Sword of Carnage). These games are called "closed-ended" games. Other games, called "open-ended" games, have no set ending, like traditional face-to-face RPGs. There are many great victories and losses, but the game never ends.

The fee charged by a moderator for one turn (sending in one set of orders and receiving one status report) ranges from under a dollar to over twenty dollars. The average price per turn is currently between four and five dollars. This may seem steep to newcomers, but compare the cost of a PBM turn, which can bring hours of enjoyment on a regular basis, to a movie ticket, or similar entertainment

Many gamers who insist that they don't like PBM gaming have never actually tried it. There are many companies who offer no-obligation, no-cost rulebooks and/or turns. With so little to risk, we hope all of our readers will try at least one PBM game.

This is an extremely abbreviated version of an article in Issue #1 of *Post Marque*. If you would like to hear more about PBM gaming, please send a SASE to SHADIS Magazine, 17880 Graystone Avenue #203, Chino Hills CA 91709, and we will send you a reprint of the article, free of charge. ❑

This is the section of *Post Marque* where we will be examining new PBM games. These are only overviews, based solely on promotional materials received from PBM companies (usually a rulebook; occasionally a sample setup). These overviews should not be construed as endorsements or complete reviews.

One True Faith

One True Faith is an intriguing new offering from Keith Langley, "a hate-free Colorado company opposing all forms of discrimination." ***OTF*** offers players the opportunity to become gods, vying for the loyalty of the diverse populace (which includes the usual cast of fantasy races) and struggling to control the various provinces of Erth (the game world), with the goal of "becoming the dominant deity of Erth." The rulebook is unclear as to exactly how that goal is attained (although winning converts is certain to figure into it), and offers only a vague description of how heroes and priests perform missions (many types available, with goals set by the player). However, the list of troop types, battle tactics, miracles, and divine powers are complete and easy to understand.

A unique feature of ***One True Faith*** is the Puzzle method of resolving debates. If both players agree when their priests are engaged in a debate, the players exchange puzzles through the GM. The player with the fewest unsolved puzzles is the winner, and his priest is victorious in the debate.

There are many other interesting elements of ***OTF***, and the setup sheet seems to indicate that the game will contain a fair amount of role-playing. A newsletter is also mentioned, although frequency and cost are not specified.

More information regarding ***One True Faith*** is available from Keith Langley, 1614 Donovan Place, Longmont CO 80501.

Westworld

My pappy always used to say, "Son, you ain't never gonna amount ta nuthin'." My pappy weren't never too partial to me. He also used to tell me, "Son, you can paint a rooster whatever color you like, but ain't nobody gonna think he's not a rooster." This colorful saying popped into my noggin as I was readin' this here report on ***Westworld***. Here, y'all can read it for yerself:

Westworld's two moderators, George Cameron and Jack Herriman II, are both players in *Stand & Deliver*, PBM's "top gun" in the Western genre. A lot of *S&D* shows up in the ***Westworld*** rulebook; some of the passages sound almost exactly like passages from the *S&D* rulebook.

There's no law against "based-on" games, however, and there appears to be enough of a difference to distinguish ***Westworld*** from its predecessor. To begin with, ***Westworld*** is 100% hand-moderated, which allows for unlimited role-playing. There are a wide variety of orders available, although little or no explanation of them is offered in the seven-page rulebook. (For example, no reason is given as to why a character might wish to "start a stampede" or "chop wood.")

The basic turn cost is $2.50 per turn. Thirteen orders are listed as "Certain Orders" or "COs" and carry an additional charge of $1.00 per order, with a maximum of two COs allowed per turn. COs include "Fist Fight," "High Noon," "Start/Run A Cattle Ranch," and the adult options, "Visit Cathouse" and "Brown Paper Sack Turn." A signed statement of age is required for the adult options.

Like most hand-moderated games, the true measure of the game is best taken from turn results, not rulebooks. (Some hand-moderated games don't even have rulebooks.) Those partial to the western genre who possess a penchant for role-playing may wish to investigate ***Westworld*** further. A rulebook, setup, and four turns cost $10.00; rules alone are $2.00. For further information, contact NLT Enterprises, 9422 Kleve Road, Hubbard Lake MI 49747.

Netrunner

Has life in the Sprawl got you down? Broken all the ice that's worth breaking in a hundred-node radius? If your wetware

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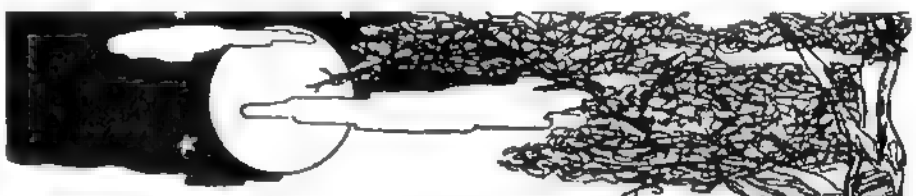

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Send a SASE for a free info pack; $10.00 for guidelines, map, and startup; or $5.00 for guidelines only. Each week of play has a turn fee of $5.00. Play as often or as seldom as you wish. Checks should be made out to Darkwood Enchantment. Thank you.

seems dry, consider jacking into ***Netrunner***, the debut PBM from the Coconut Council. Would-be console cowboys find themselves competing for data – information concerning the Net Operating System (NOS), to be specific. The first hacker to accumulate 100 gigabytes of NOS data is declared the winner.

To achieve their goals, players must create programs that appear legitimate (otherwise the Net System Operator (SYSOP) will have them eliminated). The true purpose of the programs, however, is to explore the nodes of cyberspace, hunting the elusive data, and avoiding (or eliminating) programs written by other hackers. Of course, the SYSOP is no fool and, from time to time, this computer-controlled Netmaster will assign tasks to the programs, which had better perform, or else....

The twenty-five page rulebook explains all of the elements of the game well, and even includes a glossary of terms for those unfamiliar with cyberspeak. Judging from the rules, the game may not quite be living up to its full potential by offering a somewhat simple take on a complicated, intricate topic, but that's what expansion is for. Fans of the cyberpunk genre will likely enjoy the game anyway. For more information, write to the Coconut Council, 6508 Minnetonka Blvd., St. Louis Park MN 55426-3451, or call (612) 929-7788. Ironically, no e-mail address is available.

Realm of Shaharasai

Dreamers, lovers, poets, artists, and all those with a touch of magic in their soul are invited to explore the ***Realm of Shaharasai***. ***Realm*** is the first offering of Darkwood Enchantment, and is billed as "an exercise in creativity ... a dream world that allows participants to explore and experience their deepest desires and fantasies."

The twenty-page guideline booklet is printed in a wonderful fantasy-style typeface, and offers details on gameplay, available character skills, professions, and races, and some of the points of interest in the Realm.

Realm is mixed moderation; a computer handles some of the dice rolls and calculations, but the results themselves are done solely by the "dream moderator" and staff. The guidebook also promises occasional illustrations, songs, poems, etc. to accompany turns. There is also a quarterly newsletter that is free of charge to all participants.

Participants who choose to do so may also enjoy "adult fantasies of an artistically erotic and sexual nature, in good taste (not violent or abusive)." Naturally, all explorers in the Realm must be at least eighteen years of age.

Turns are $5.00 each and may be run as often as once every week. ***Realm*** contains some gaming elements, but the main focus seems to be on experiences and creativity, often of a spiritual nature ("spiritual quests" are another theme prevalent in the guidebook). This is definitely something different. A guideline booklet, map, and setup can be purchased for $10.00; the guidebook alone is $5.00. For more information on ***Realm of Shaharasai***, contact Darkwood Enchantment, PO Box 10002, Cleveland OH 44110.

Krahlizek

If you think you know someone with a mean streak, be thankful that he's not the great god Krahl. Krahl's idea of a good time is to take eight of the nastiest, merciless, power-hungry Earthlings he can find, and drop them all in the middle of Krahlizek, to let them battle it out to the death.

Krahlizek is a closed-ended wargame from the aptly-named Aggressive Addiction Games. Players struggle to control the most land provinces at the end of the game ("a random turn after turn 20.").

An assortment of twentieth century military units are available for the players' use. The availability of thirty-five "innovations" adds a *Civilization*-like feel to ***Krahlizek***. Available innovations include coinage, meteorology, nuclear weapons, urban planning, and cloaking devices.

Krahlizek promises "laser quality" turn reports, and full-color maps. Aggressive Addiction's due date policy is somewhat different than the standard; instead of a "due date," they set a "postmark date." Turns that are mailed on or before the postmark date, but do not arrive in time to be processed, will receive some form of "consolation," which helps

A storm wind batters Golroth as he continues his travels through Breasail. Is it thoughts of the troll cave or the cold rain that sends shivers down his back? The fighter wraps himself in his cloak and seeks a resting place under the dripping pines. As he searches, Golroth encounters a woodcutter wearing a curious charm and bearing an ax and a bundle of branches. Greeting Golroth courteously, the rustic asks why he is outside on such a wild night. Is he not afraid of the demons that could suck out a man's soul? The native invites Golroth to take refuge at his house in the grove to the north. It is a miserable hovel, he adds, but will provide a roof against the rain, and a fire in hearth to keep evil at bay. As Golroth is about to accept, he sees a dark glimmer in the woodcutter's eye that suggests caution...

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A setup, rulebook, and the first three turns are available for $10.00; rules alone cost $2.50. Turns cost $3.00 each, but bulk purchasing can lower the cost to as little as $2.00 each (twenty turns for $40.00), which is surprisingly low for laser-quality output and color maps. For more information, contact Aggressive Addiction Games, PO Box 813, Silver Spring MD 20918, or via Internet as 71334.2636@cis.com

Firebreather

Horizon Games makes its debut on the PBM scene with ***Firebreather***, a fantasy adventure game where players control a party of six characters. The party's adventures take place on Breasail, a shimmering, magical island in the land of Tintagel.

Three character types are available to new players: Elves, Fighters, and Wizards.

The sample turn that accompanied the rulebook was six pages in length and included detailed records and charts. Results are reported phase by phase, with all details of actions attempted by the characters included. The text becomes somewhat repetitive in places, since some details do not change from phase to phase, and printouts of major encounters could be spaced more effectively to avoid confusion, but overall, these are minor quibbles. More notable is the fact that the text is very informative, including combat scores, "dice roll" results, etc. The turn output is laser printed, and each turn includes a laser-printed map of the party's surrounding area.

The rules take up two sides of a legal-size sheet of paper, in small text, but seem to cover the basic mechanics of the game in suitable detail for a new player. A recent addendum to the rules was issued, the most notable detail of which is that character death is now possible.

Turns are processed up to once every eight days, including Sundays and holidays – Horizon Games' post office is open seven days a week. Turns are $4.00 each. Rules and setup are *free* of charge. To learn more about ***Firebreather***, contact Horizon Games, PO Box 581434, Minneapolis MN 55458-1434, or call (612) 374-1972. ❑

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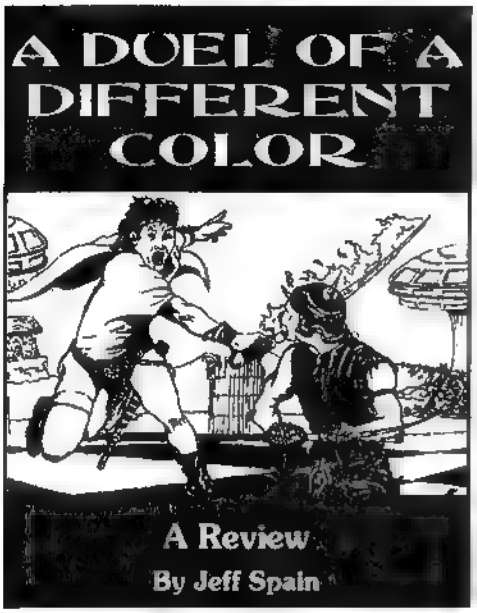

I closed my eyes and remembered being very young; maximum insecurity, still struggling to figure out what I should say, do, or notice. It varied from place to place. It seems that the only safe topics were weather, flora, and fauna. "Powers that be, grant me your aid in preparing my thoughts for this battle," I whispered. Thinking about white flowers, I opened my eyes and entered the dueling chamber. A figure stood in the scullery, leaning against an open doorway and blocking the light. "What a pity," it said. "It really is a pity. I have nothing against you, Krait. Even though I know you truly do not like me." Eartin of the Fallen Angels sighed, rather dramatically. "But there it is, the duel ... and we MUST duel."

The above passage is a quote from the start of a battle in ***A Duel of A Different Color***. ***Duel*** is a PBM fantasy-based, dueling chambers game of combat between wizards. Each player assumes the role of a master wizard with five apprentices. All characters are students at Catadu University on the fantasy world of Nuvaw. Turns are sent through the mail and the game is 100% computer moderated. Detailed descriptions of the results of each duel are printed out and mailed back to the player.

Character Creation

Players create their apprentices from any of five unique races: Human, Abooda, Eb'nel, Totiji, and Zaxk. The rulebook shows drawings as well as detailed descriptions of each race. The game is rich in detail, and each race has its own unique abilities and personality quirks.

After selecting a race, players assign a preset number of points to four different attributes for each character. The four attributes are Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence, and Life points. Strength points are the physical energy used to cast spells. Dexterity determines whether or not a student is able to successfully perform the intricate motions necessary to bring a spell into being. Each spell has an Intelligence rating – if the student's Intelligence score does not meet or exceed this rating, then the student cannot cast the spell. Life points denote how many units of damage a character may take before unconsciousness or death.

The third step in creating a character is to choose his "color." Spells are divided into several categories called "colors," with seven colors to choose from. A character is given a color when created, and may only cast spells from that color. More intelligent wizards will be able to utilize more spells from their color. After a character is created, he is ready for the duel.

The Duel

Every turn, each of a player's five characters enters the arena and is matched against an opponent. Victory is determined by either physically beating your opponent (by using offensive spells or due to exhaustion) or by changing three of the five clear crystals of Nuvaw to your color, through the use of magic. Victory is normally accomplished by the latter, and actual arena deaths are rare.

The turn is divided into ten phases. Players select a primary and a secondary spell that they wish to cast for each of the ten phases, and how much power or strength they are putting into each spell. This game has a unique twist with the addition of a third factor called, "emotion level." A character's emotion level during a duel may range from one to ten and determines whether he will cast the primary spell or the secondary spell in a particular phase (i.e. a character will cast either his primary spell or his secondary spell in a given phase, not both). The player selects his character's emotion level for each phase, but it is almost always modified by the events occurring in the duel, and the personality of the character. For example, a player may set his character's emotion level at seven for a phase, but if the character sustained heavy damage during that phase, the modified emotion level might actually be five. Multiplying the modified emotion level by ten indicates the percentage chance that a character will cast his primary spell (e.g. a modified emotion level of seven indicates a 70% chance that the character will cast his primary spell, and a 30% chance that he will instead cast his secondary spell). Choosing the proper emotion level adds a new dimension of tactics to what would otherwise be a standard arena duel. I have found that a careful mix of offensive and defensive spells is required to win a duel.

Game Quality

Fantasy role-players will like the familiar role-playing feel of ***Duel***. The turn reports are written in narrative format, making each turn a short story between eight and twelve pages in length. This adds a role-playing feel to the game and makes for enjoyable reading, even if your character loses the duel. Each turn also shows the current combat rating in wins, ties, and draws for each character. As in

Set on the mythical campus of Catadu, *DUEL* is a magical PBM combat game where humans and other exotic beings compete for academic achievement. You take the role of an Instructor that guides five apprentices in their development of incantation strategies and conflict tactics. Students conduct spell-casting engagements by altering the five ancient Crystals of Nuvaw, while fending off the attacks of a worthy opponent.

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traditional RPGs, characters start out at low levels and increase in experience points as they do battle. Experience points can later be traded for increased attributes

Characters begin ***Duel*** with the rank of Hue, and strive to be promoted through the ranks of Tint, Shade, Tone, Pigment, and finally, Color. There is only one character ranked as a Color for each particular Color of magic.

Duel is open-ended with due dates either every two weeks or once a month at the player's choice. Players can even stop playing for up to six months by going on a sabbatical and picking up the game where they left off. For players who like role-playing and are tired of reading statistical printouts of their turns, ***Duel*** is the game. I hope to see you in the arena

Signing Up

Fractal Dimensions is new to the PBM field and offers a ***Duel*** setup, rules, and two turns for $13.00. Thereafter, turns are $5.00 each (which covers all five characters). For more information, contact Fractal Dimensions, 17-29 Main St. Suite 316, Cortland NY 13045, or call (607) 753-9246. Finally, FD can be reached via Internet as dar6@cornell.edu. ❑

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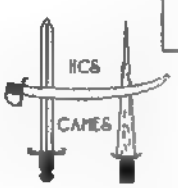

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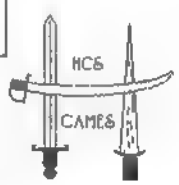

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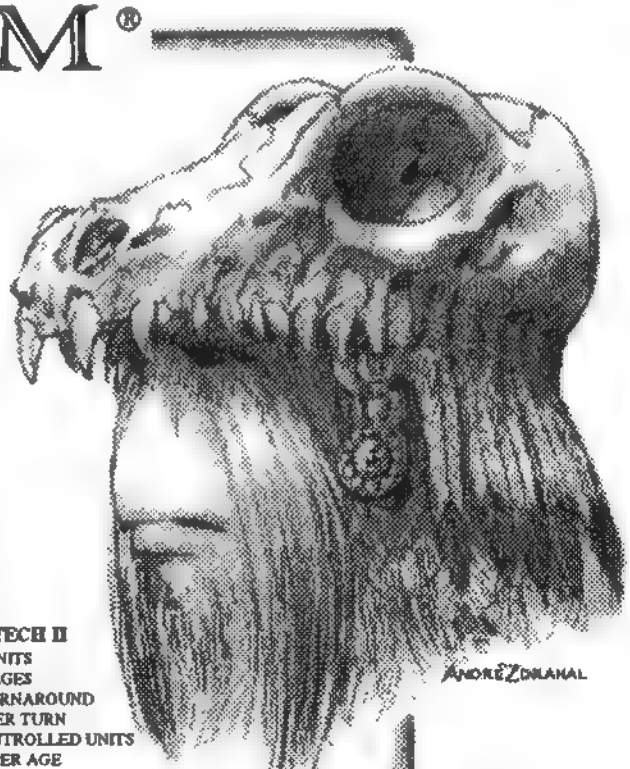

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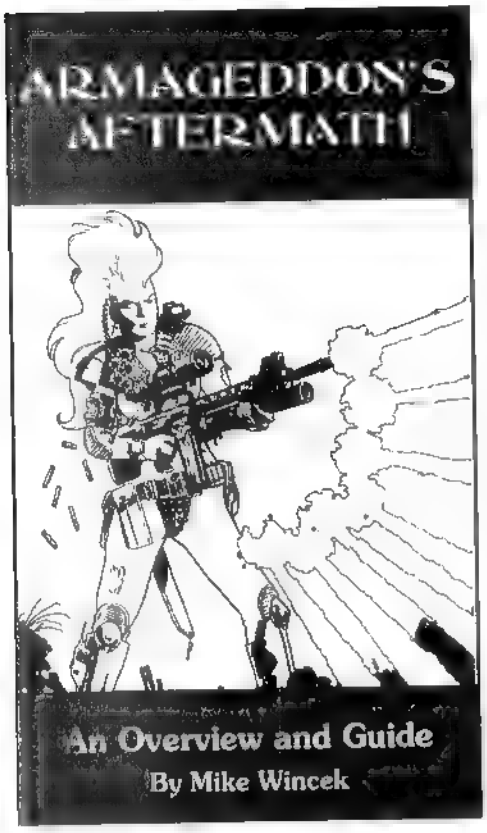

Armageddon's Aftermath (hereafter called ***AA***) is an open-ended PBM game set in the United States after a nuclear war. Players may choose numerous skills to assign to their five starting characters. These skills range from weaponry to cybernetics. Each character is allowed a few skills at first, but many more are available through play. Then the player chooses which weapons and equipment each character starts out with. Now that the characters are ready, just give each a name and choose a name for the group. Once all of these set-up choices are out of the way, your group is ready for action!

What is it that you're supposed to do, you ask? Well, that's completely up to you. There are no set orders or codes; you simply write what you would like each character to try to do that turn. Each character gets one primary action and three secondary actions. I know, you're still wondering what to do and what the purpose of the game is, right? You're not alone. When starting the game, almost everyone has no idea about what's going on, including myself. That's the main purpose of this article – after reading this, newer players should have a general idea of a direction to take with their group.

First up, the world isn't like it used to be. Everyone's dangerous, including all NPCs. I tried to mug an average guy walking down the street on my first turn. Bad idea. The guy whipped out a submachine gun and took off my character's head! Starting characters have low skill scores compared to even the guy on the street. While I'm on the subject of skill scores, characters who don't increase their skill scores are basically useless. Make sure you continually keep your guys practicing. Those secondary actions are great for this. If a character is practicing any kind of weaponry skill, they will need a weapon (of course) and *plenty* of ammo. Don't expect a character to become proficient with a weapon without burning up ammo. Cross-training your guys is a good way to give new skills to characters. Skill scores of ten to fifteen are pretty good, but remember that there are some characters out there with much higher scores.

On your first turn you'll probably be located in, or close to, a town. Perhaps you might even find an abandoned building or such. In any case, finding a place where you can set up a command post is a must. At a command post, your characters can do their practicing, make plans for future dealings, sleep, eat, or just hide from anyone that you'd rather not face! Once you find a building that appears empty, do not just walk in to find out! The place could be booby-trapped or inhabited. Spend a turn searching the outside for any signs of traps or people, and maybe peek a look through a window. If that checks out okay, then cautiously inspect the inside in the same manner. Taking on a high level of paranoia while filling out your turnsheet will greatly extend the life of your characters, and I'm sure they'll thank you for it.

After taking ownership of a suitable building, I would suggest that it be properly protected with motion sensors, electric fencing, mines, guard dogs, automated machine guns, and about one thousand hired mercs. Of course, there is no way that a new group could ever afford all of that (heck, I don't even have all of that), but at least put good locks on the doors and bars on the windows. Have your characters find jobs in town for awhile to

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earn money for additional security. Remember, losing a command post means that you'll also lose everything that you stored there, too.

Now that your group is set up in a modestly secured command post, it might be time to start thinking about raising your income. There are many avenues to try, but selling drugs seems to be the most popular, and busy. There are some groups always looking to pay others for delivering, but your guys will need a vehicle first. Weapon sales, prostitution, bars, and other shops are also popular. Or maybe you'd like to infiltrate an existing group or business and take it over.

Your imagination is the only limit on what you can attempt to do in ***AA***. By putting yourself in your characters' places (role-playing) you can plan your actions much more effectively than by just writing what you would like your characters to do. Simple actions, like driving back to your command post, would change to something like, "Drive back to the command post, taking a different route than last turn. Make sure no one tries to follow us. If someone does, drive back to our starting point and ready weapons." Paranoid? Yes, but those characters will probably survive a lot longer than most. At some point in the game, you will come across a player that you would love to eradicate. By using creative and cautious thinking, he'll be toast before you know it.

AA is run by Damien Games. Setup and rules cost $8 00, and turns are $4.00 thereafter. Turns are processed up to once every seven days. There is also a free monthly newsletter sent to all players. For more information, contact Damien Games, 1209 Park Hill Circle, Knoxville TN 37909. ❑

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The commander approaches the Duke and salutes "Your Grace, the infidels are approaching. The troops are formed and ready for your command." You look over the thousands of brave men who answered your call and follow your banner. To your north are the troops of Earl Rayhimyar and to your south, the Regency forces under the command of your brother-in-law, Sir Henri. All await your signal before advancing to cut off the infidels and destroy them. "Drummers! Order the advance!"

The World of Delenda

Delenda est Cathargo is a role-playing game because each of the characters you control is played as if he or she was a living being. It is a power game because the medieval period was rife with people trying to obtain more power, either secular or religious.

The world is divided into two main religions, the Flaminians (Christians) in the east and the Hiyiros (Islamic) in the west. Several smaller religions are also present, as are some demon-worshipping sects. At the moment, the Flaminian church is currently going through a schism similar to the Roman Catholic vs. Orthodox churches.

The political field is just as confusing. The Hiyiros all serve the Caliph and act as one body. For the Flaminians it is anything but united! With half a dozen countries and closely related families spread across the borders, the shifting tides of alliances makes for great back-room politics. Occasionally, the nations unite for a crusade, but even here you will sometimes find politics and family blood feuds interfering with the nominal goal of fighting the Hiyiros.

Your Characters

Each character in ***Delenda*** will have eight characteristics such as bravery, thriftiness, faith, and sex drive. These will help guide you and the GM when considering actions. If you are very miserly, you will have to provide a good reason for doling out all that silver. But these are still only guides and can change based on actions you take.

The character will also have five to six skills. Personal combat, jousting, siege warfare, beauty, theology and geology are just a few examples of the many possible skills By taking a skill two or three times, you are making yourself more proficient at that skill. No skill can be taken more than three times. If you don't like your skills, you can change a skill. To do this, you drop the skill you want to lose and then start training in the new skill. But since it takes a game year (six months real time) to learn this new skill, you are losing a skill for that period.

You will start the game with a family of three to four characters who are related to each other in some degree. You can never have more than four characters, and war, assassins, accidents, and just plain old age can reduce this number to as low as one. Since most positions are assumptions of families which are no longer being run, each will come with the characters established in the world.

Your character's profession is normally established prior to your entry. Most families have a church member, either a Bishop, Archbishop, member of a monastic order or a Kadi (judge) in the Hiyiros faith. Another member of your family will have a political position either as a landed noble, tribal leader, or governor of Caliphate lands. The third and fourth characters will usually be minor persons trying to get ahead. These are not set in stone and some families have all their characters either in the church or in the political arena.

Characters with lands or church station will have income from fief revenue, church donations, and the like. Trade is possible, although Flaminian nobles who conduct trade will see their social standing drop as trade is beneath nobles. The Hiyiros do not have this problem, as the Islamic faith often had men who held lands and also were active in trade.

Characters can be either male or female, although those playing a Hiyiros family will find their female characters rather limited in actions. The Flaminian families have more active roles for females and it is not unusual to see a female character leading troops on the battlefield.

Military Forces

All troop types found during this period are in ***Delenda***. You have knights, several types of cavalry, several foot troop types, siege crew, sailors, and both foot and horse archers. You can also have a unit that consists of a single "specialist" such as translator, doctor, teacher or mistress.

You can have up to sixteen units for each character with each unit being from one to ??? in size. Each unit will have a skill that ranges from three to five, with ratings within this range denoting regular, elite, or guard troops. This rating improves with experience. If you have land, you will have troops sworn to you as their feudal leader. These troops provide a short period of service as their duty, but they can sometimes be convinced to remain in the field longer for payment. Units must be paid and fed, and failure to do this will result in desertions until the unit no longer exists. If they were feudal troops, they will return home and be available the next year. If they were mercenaries, they are gone for good and you will have to find more and train them.

What Can You Do?

Nearly any activity you can think of is possible in the game as long as it is in the correct time period. Trying to "invent" rifles will not work – no matter how much time you put into it. The GM will not interfere to prevent a family from being crushed if someone else can figure out a way to do it. Characters in the church hierarchy can rise to Archbishop, Cardinal, and even Pope; or they can be in holy orders and rise to become the Grand Master of that order. You can acquire new lands, or lose some. Those in the Hiyiros can be promoted to ever higher ranks up to the Grand Vizier. And if someone can figure out a way, and have the power, they might even become the Caliph.

Your actions are role-played based on orders you write in plain English. You write what you want your characters to do in normal sentences and your responses come back the same way. There is no limit to the number of actions each character can take, except that each turn represents fourteen days (or twenty-eight days for non-UK players). As long as you have a lot of actions that take only a short period, you can do quite a lot each turn.

Tips for New Players

When you first join ***Delenda***, you will be immediately immersed in the happen-

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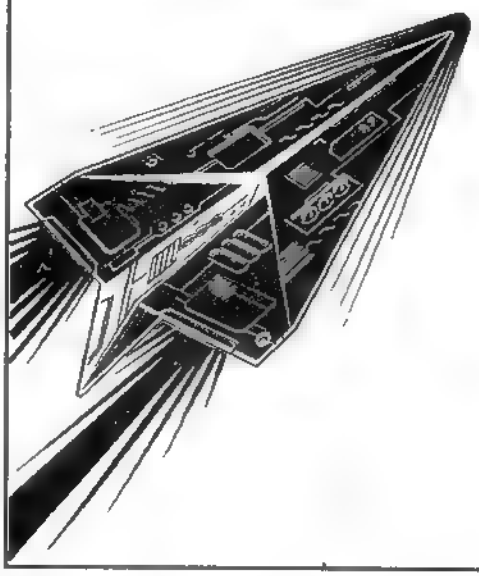

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DON'T DELAY!

ings in your area. Don't panic – just take it slow. Contact your immediate superiors as well as those below you. Ask those around you, such as your steward, castilian, military leaders, or city leaders. They can all provide some insight

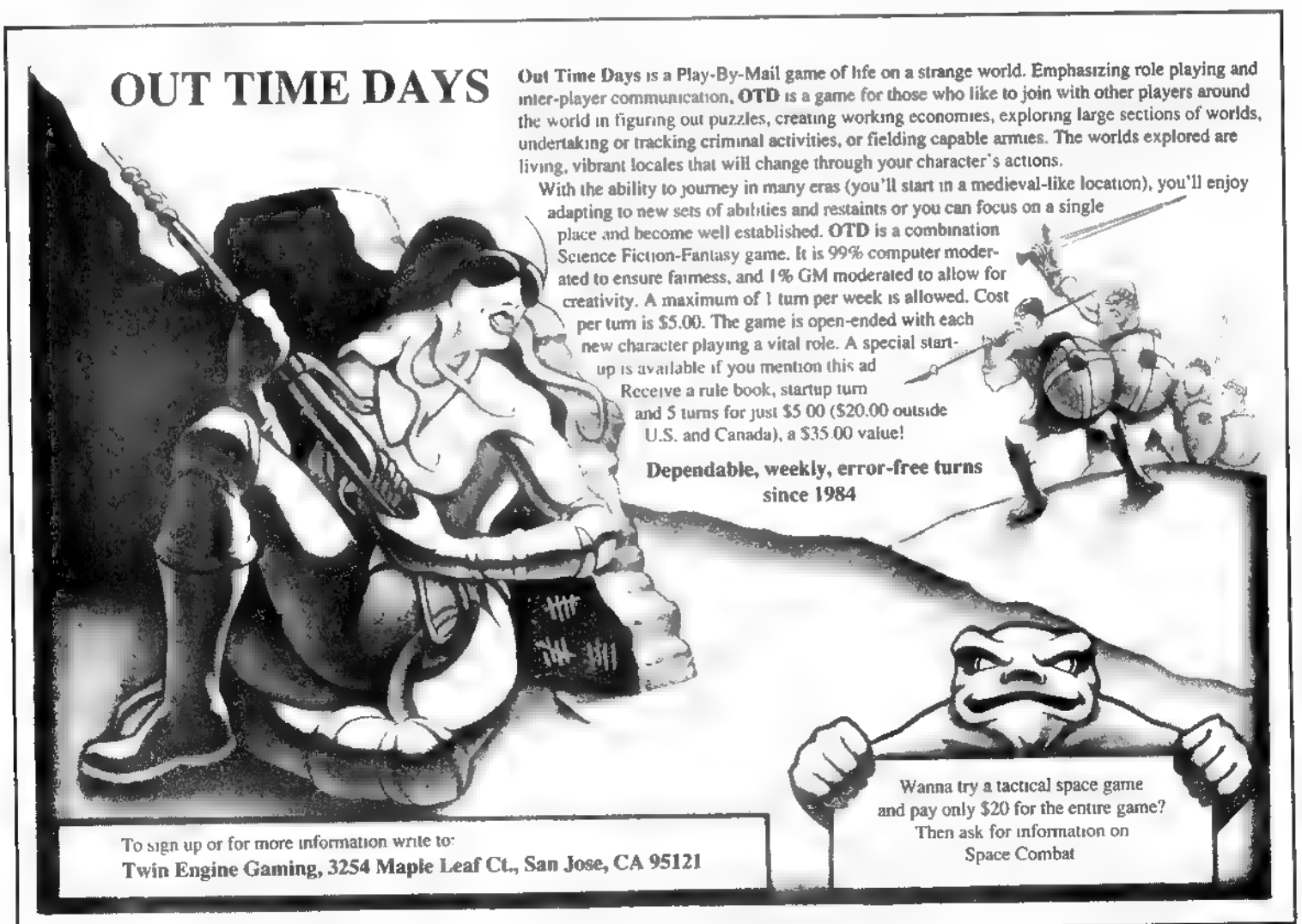
Never start throwing your weight around right from the start because no matter how much power you think you have, there is somebody, or several somebodies, who will take you down if you tread on what they consider their "turf." And it isn't unusual for a new player to overrate their ability to back their actions.

Reading up on the time period is of immense help, especially if you are playing a Hiyiros family. While the game is not an exact match, there are very many similarities. There are also many information sheets you can request that give background, or technical info. But this is slow since you can only request one per turn (or two per turn for non-UK players). And for some, you must role-play – getting the information sheet by talking with a certain group of people, or traveling to a particular area. Your first action should be to request the information sheet that lists each of the "common" sheets available. If you are not sure which sheets to request, give the GM a general topic and ask him to select one for you.

Conclusion

Delenda est Cathargo is a great game for those interested in the medieval period. U.S. players should not be put off by the fact that the game is run from the U.K. About 20% of the players in the game live in the U.S. and there is little disadvantage. The current Grand Vizier is from the U.S., as are many powerful families throughout the game. Turnaround time is extremely swift, with turns coming back within two weeks of the date you mailed them.

The only concern for a player is the cost, which is on the high side. Turn costs vary depending on how much you do, and how much role-playing you are involved in with others. An average turn is about $15 and U.S. players can pay via credit card through Deltax Gaming, which is based in the U.S. Considering the detail of the world and the responses you get in your turn, this price is very reasonable. For more information contact Waveney Games, 28 Diprose Road, Corfe Mullen Wimborn, Dorset BH21 3QY, United Kingdom. ❑



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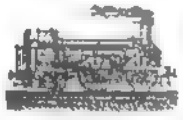

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Joe Genero,
Will you marry me?
Mary Luann Lubowsky

Muffin,
Hope you got Giving Trees, Green Eggs, and Ham for xmas. Hang in there!
Pooh

Cyber-Kristy,
Great Job! Thanks for all the help and support. Now quit whining and get a job.
JRB

Jolly,
Thanks for making my trip truly memorable. Check's in the mail. See you at Origins.
Nichole

Hedley & Brick,
I'd like to order four bags of leaves and a generous scattering of walnuts for my yard
Dredger

Tina,
Laetum auspicium, Egregius! Good luck Brownsville girl! Hit-me-with-a-brick.
Southern Intrigue

Edith,
Ya gotta get off that catnip girl! It's a dead end street. Isn't my love enough to make you happy?
Felix

A big SHADIS weasel (with a modified Irish jig) to everyone who contributed to the magazine in 1993!

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J R.,
You're the best cyberbuddy in the world. I'd share my park bench and saltines with you any time! And b-t-w – get a *real* job!
KJ

George,
Merry Christmas! I love you. You are my favorite Mutant Gamer
Love George

Raindancer,
Thanks for the letter and support. Do me a favor and drag the cat woman to Group Therapy and have a cold one on me
Dazed in L.A.

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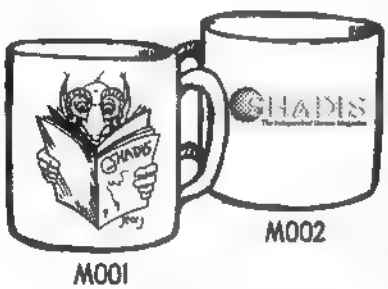

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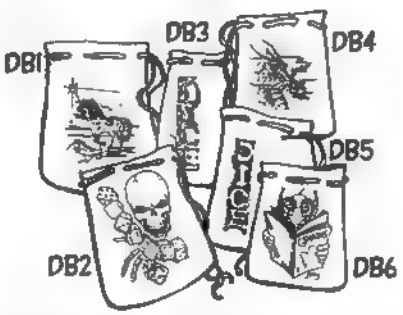

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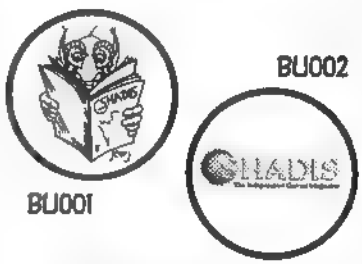

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BRIGHT FUTURE
AN HOUR OR SO LATER. POLICE HQ, NEW MIAMI. THE UNITED WORLD POWERS MADE BEING A COP A PAIN AT TIMES. LAWS WERE IN CONSTANT FLUX. ONE NEVER KNEW WHEN A STATUTE WOULD CHANGE; SOMETIMES THEY DID OVERNIGHT. YES, THE WORLD WAS A MESS...
THE WEATHER IS CHAOTIC, RAINY MORE THAN NOT. THE WATERS HAVE RISEN
EVEN WITH ALL THE PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD, JOANN STILL BELIEVED ONE PERSON COULD MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.
WHAT, AND RUIN MY RECORD?
CAN'T YOU EVER BRING THESE BACK UNDAMAGED?!
story·EDWIN MILLHEIM art·RAY LEDERER letters·JESSICA ALLEN

Yes ma'am, I'm listening. A monster. Oh sure..
ARRRRRRRR! I'LL BITE YOU! I'LL EAT YOU ALL! I MUST LIVE!
HEY JOANN! THE CAPTAIN WANTS TO SEE YOU.
YOU GO ON; I'LL FINISH THE REPORT.
CAPT. BLACKBU
STUDY
THANKS. I'LL DO THE PAPERWORK NEXT TIME.
JOANN, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU AND YOUR PARTNER WERE NOT TOO FAR FROM THE LATEST MURDER WHEN IT HAPPENED! THE CRIME LAB TEAM CHECKED OUT THE LATEST VICTIM, ONE HENRY DARK. SHOT TWICE WITH A HIGH POWERED RIFLE ROUND.
HE WAS FOUND NOT FAR FROM WHERE YOU MADE THAT ARREST TODAY. THE ROUNDS MATCH THE OTHER BULLETS FOUND AT THE OTHER FIVE MURDERS.
Gunshot wounds f
a large caliber
rifle. V
victims
includir
CAPTAIN, IT'S THE END OF MY SHIFT. ALL I WANT TO DO NOW IS TO GET HOME AND GET SOME REST. CAN'T YOU GIVE THIS TO...
HERE ARE THE FILES ON EVERYTHING CONCERNING THIS CASE. SEE WHAT YOU CAN COME UP WITH, OK?
VICTIMS' AGES RANGE FROM MID-20's TO MID-50's. RACE OF VICTIMS HAS VARIED, INCLUDING ASIAN, BLACK, AND WHITE. THIS SUGGESTS A RANDOM KILLER.
SO FAR, THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING LINKING THE VICTIMS.

HEY, JOANN! I JUST SAW THE SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS BOARD. YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE CAPTAIN OF THE OFF WORLD POLICE? THAT'S GREAT!
I'LL LOOK INTO IT, SIR.
I SIGNED UP FOR IT TOO! I'LL BE WORKING UNDER YOU.
I WISH...
IT'S GOING TO BE TWO YEARS BEFORE THE SHIPS ARE FINISHED, BUT YEAH, I SIGNED UP FOR IT.
PARDON ME, MISS WHAT'S THE PAY SCALE LIKE FOR A FISH AROUND HERE?
WATCH OUT! SHE HAS A LOADED FISH!!
OH, SO VERY FUNNY. COME ON, GARY!
WHY SO GLUM, PARTNER? I HEAR YOU LANDED THAT HEAD POSITION ON THAT SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT OFF WORLD. HELL, 4,000 A MONTH WOULD MAKE ME A HAPPY GUY!
WHAT? OH, IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT, GARY. IT'S JUST THIS DAMN HOMICIDE CASE THE CAPTAIN LANDED IN MY LAP! I JUST WISH THE EVIDENCE TECHS WOULD HAVE GOTTEN MORE AT THESE SCENES. NOT MUCH TO GO ON.
ANY UNIT IN THE AREA OF THE UNITED WORLD TEST LABS, CODE 21. 10-46.
THIS IS STINGER-FIVE. WE ARE 10-10
NO GARY! NO... NO NO NO!!
AND 10-51
DAMN, GARY!
10-4 STINGER-5

ONE OF THE WORST THINGS ABOUT POLICE WORK IS THAT IT SEEMS LIKE HALF THE TIME PEOPLE ARE LYING TO YOU FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER. SOMETIMES IT'S TO PROTECT SOMEONE THEY MAY KNOW. OR SOMETIMES THE FACT THAT A UNITED WORLD POLICE OFFICER IS ASKING THE QUESTIONS IS ENOUGH OF A REASON TO THEM.
ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT WHOEVER BROKE IN, BROKE IN THE WINDOW TO GET IN. THEY DID NOT TAKE ANYTHING AT ALL. FOR THE MOST PART, ALL THEY DID WAS TEAR THE PLACE UP.
DR. GLEASON, IF YOU RECHECK AND FIND ANYTHING MISSING, PLEASE REPORT IT.
DOCTOR, WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU DO HERE, ANYWAY?
I DON'T THINK THAT'S ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS, DETECTIVE
THE AGENCY REPRESENTING UNITED WORLD SECURITY WILL BE TAKING OVER NOW. THIS IS NO LONGER YOUR CONCERN.
NOT MY CONCERN? WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO, SIT BACK AND LET YOU PLAY COP? THIS IS OUR JURISDICTION!
WHAT?! YOU SON-OF-A-B-
WHOA, PARTNER! CALM DOWN. DON'T LET THE JERK GET TO YOU.
NO GARY, REALLY! LOOK AT THE WINDOW! THERE'S A LITTLE GLASS ON THE FLOOR, BUT MORE ON THE LEDGE. I DON'T THINK THIS WAS A BREAK IN... I THINK IT WAS A BREAK OUT!
CHRIST GARY! THE MAN IS SUCH A...
JOANN, YOU KNOW HOW THE LAWS CHANGE. SO IT'S NOT OUR JURISDICTION. THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S PERSONAL. LET'S GO.
NO DETECTIVE, THIS IS NOT YOUR JURISDICTION ANYMORE. IT'S UNITED WORLD POWER PROPERTY. THAT MAKES IT MY JURISDICTION.
GARY, I KNOW THEY'RE HIDING SOMETHING, NOW
BUT YOU CAN GET ME SOME COFFEE. JUST A TOUCH OF CREAMER.

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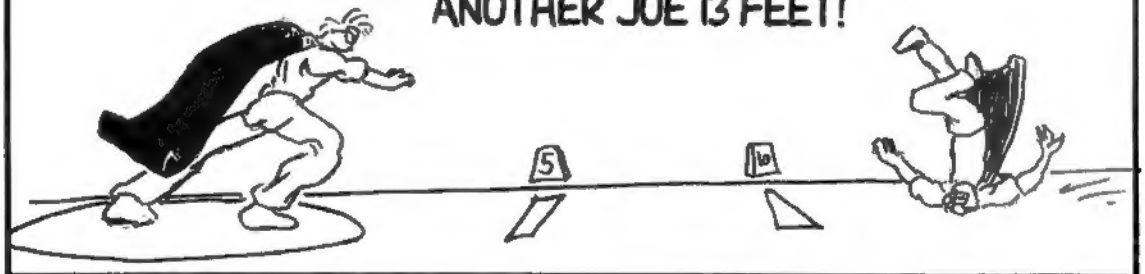
CHAMPIONS:	190 SEC	110 SEC	300 SEC
VAMPIRE:	60 SEC	GM'S DISCRETION	GM'S DISCRETION

BIG TIME AMATEUR WRESTLING: JOE MANIA!

IN CHAMPIONS, ONE JOE CAN THROW ANOTHER JOE 13 FEET!



IN VAMPIRE, ONE JOE CANNOT OVERBEAR OR BODY SLAM ANOTHER JOE AT ALL.

(HE MUST SCORE "THREE SUCCESSES," BUT HE ONLY GETS TO ROLL TWO DICE.)

HELP JOE EXPLORE HIS LIMITS!
SEND IN YOUR IDEAS FOR STUNTS AND FEATS AND STUMP JOE!!

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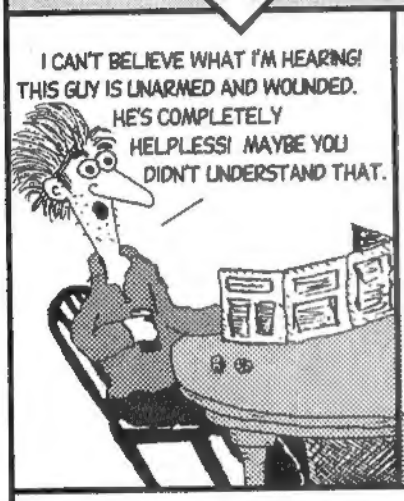

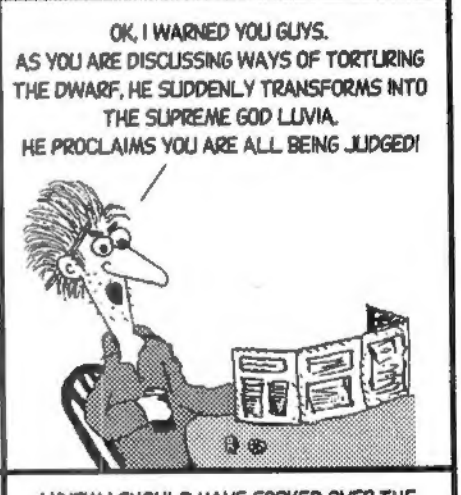

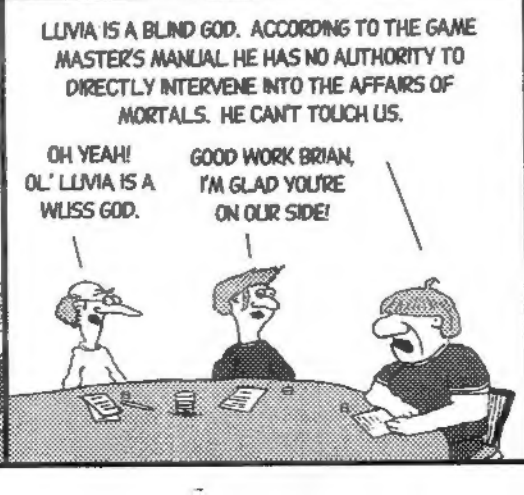

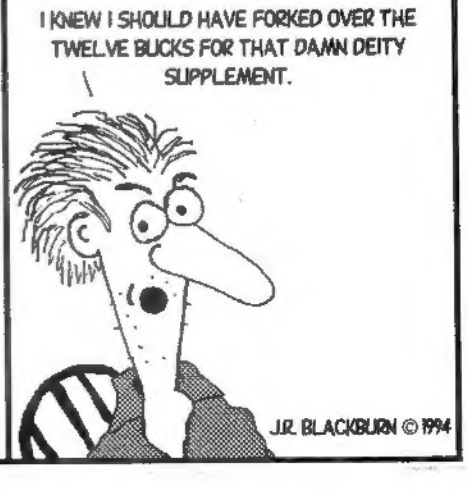

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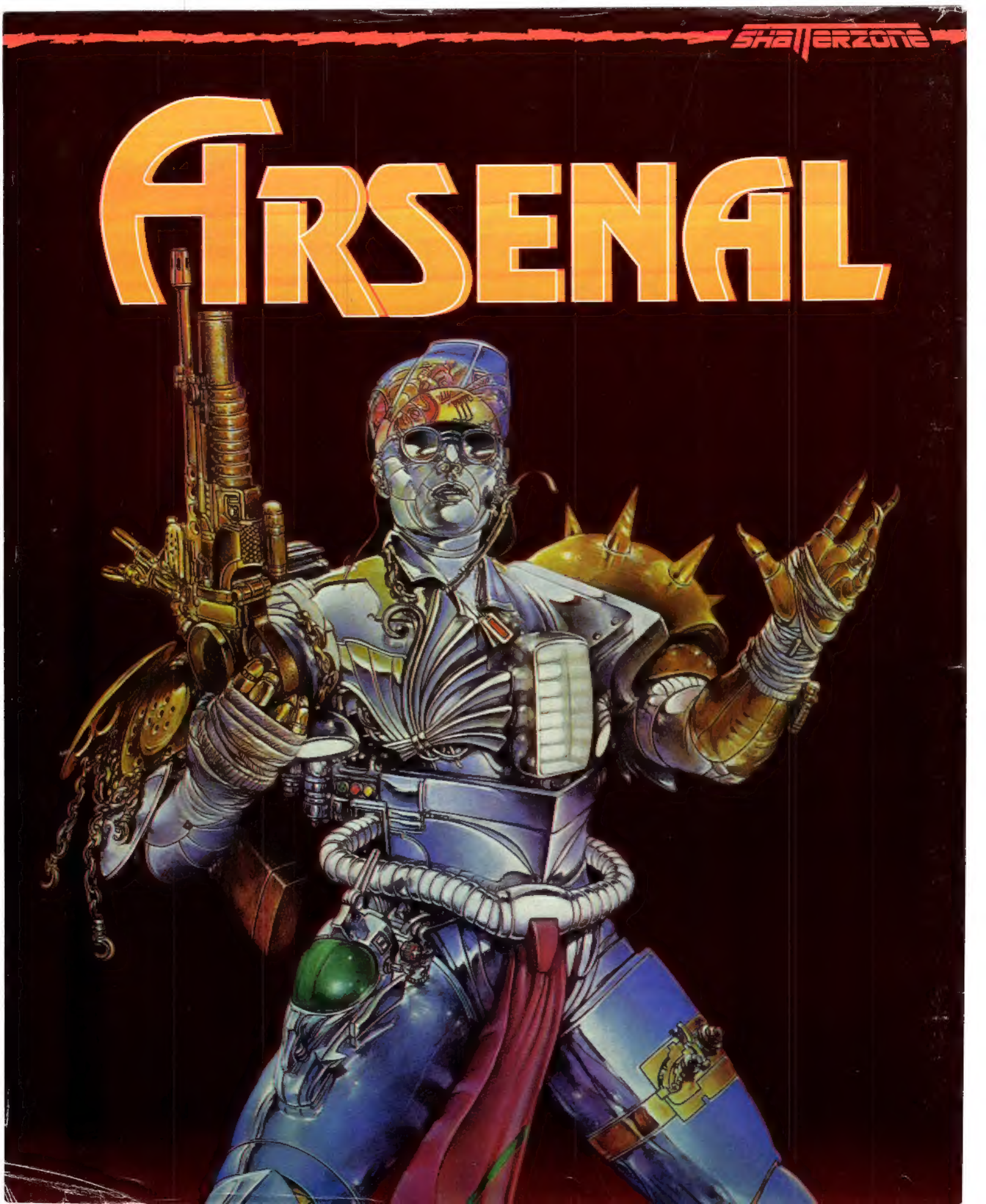
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